

I have thought a lot about my testimony for HB222. I've been living with this legislation, and its many components for a long time, just as you have, and I wanted to speak from my heart...which means I have re-written my comments over and over again in my head this past weekend.

I also know what you expect from me, and I was ready to deliver that speech. But I know many people here today are also prepared to point out things I considered including. Because these teachers will be immediately and intimately impacted by the decision you will ultimately make, you need to hear their concerns directly from them. You will probably hear many of the issues repeated and delivered passionately by the people who send Matt, Robin and me here every day to represent them.

However I hope you will listen to each of them and their concerns about why using student test scores or other achievement measures and Idaho's teacher evaluation model is a wrong way to determine pay increases. Many of them will tell you about how they have lost **highly respected** colleagues to surrounding states where teachers are paid sometimes thousands of more dollars each year. Some of them may tell you that they are also considering abandoning Idaho or the teaching profession altogether.

Some may express a lack of trust with **this process** and a fear about whether the legislature will keep **this** promise over the course of the next five years and beyond. And finally, some of them will urge you to please include them when making important policy decisions that affect them and their students.

I want to talk about them...my teaching colleagues sitting behind me now and teaching children all over the state. All of these folks have left their classrooms and offices and traveled long distances to be here today. They know that we are at an important crossroad for education in Idaho. And they know better than any of us, what it will take to ensure we are able to offer the highest quality programs for our students and communities.

These teachers did not become professional educators to get rich. They did not become teachers so they could “have summers off” or for any other frivolous reasons bandied about. They **choose** to dedicate their lives to our future by teaching our children.

They are the people who lay awake at night and worry about the child whose parents have health problems or drug problems or might be in prison. They are the people who buy food, and coats, and clothes, and whatever else is needed for their students so they won't be hungry or cold or in want of anything. These teachers spend \$1000's of dollars out of their own pockets every year to make sure the children they teach have the supplies they need to learn and that they need in their classrooms so they can thoroughly teach a lesson...because schools do not have enough money for supplies.

My teaching colleagues also spend \$1000s of dollars on continuing their education, because they know how important education is. As these teachers gain experience in the classroom and take additional classes, they become mentors for others who are where they were...without expecting “leadership” pay. They do it because they care about each other and they care about the success of the children.

And if you want to talk about accountability, as I've said before, there is no one... NO ONE ... I know of who is more accountable than a teacher. They are accountable to the students they teach – daily they seek resources that will help a child learn a concept or enable a gifted student to excel. They are accountable to the parents – who they work with to make sure the school and the home are coordinated and working together so their student will succeed.

They are accountable to the administrator in their building and at the district level; to the elected trustees of the school board; to their communities. And they are accountable to our profession and to you.

They did not become teachers to get rich; they became teachers to teach and help students learn and do whatever in life they want to do. But they also expect to make a living and support their own families too. They expect to be acknowledged for the additional education they seek and pay for, for the nights and weekends and summers in which they work many long hours for their student's success.

I want to ask you to set aside your personal beliefs about the IEA and unions in general. Our members are NOT opposed to changing the teacher pay system. They are NOT trying to block important education reform. They ARE committed to encouraging, recognizing, and rewarding excellence in teaching because we know by doing so, students will be successful.

We know that if changing the way teachers are paid is done well, it can drive positive change. But if it's done poorly, it can create dissention and dysfunction throughout the state. We have always believed the best decisions are made at the local level and created in cooperation with those who will be affected by the changes.

We are pleased to have been part of the Governor's Task Force for Improving Education in 2013 that resulted in the development of a unique set of goals for our state's education system. We value the hard work and compromise from so many on that Task Force. However, we are very concerned that the policy-making dynamic has reverted to "business as usual" following the original Governor's Task Force. Classroom teachers and IEA representatives were not given a significant voice in the drafting of the Tiered Certification and Career Ladder proposals, and I believe that that is a major reason why this legislation is in jeopardy today.

IEA and our members remain committed to the collaborative process and the goal of building an education system that benefits students, teachers and communities throughout the great state of Idaho. I ask you to please make a commitment to these teaching professionals that you will ensure they are included in the decision-making processes at both the state and local levels.

I want to thank and acknowledge you -- our legislators -- for your desire to pay teachers more and for your hard work in searching for solutions that will enable us to attract and retain quality teachers. We know that respect, well paid teachers are important to a child's success. Sustaining a long-term funding commitment to Idaho's public schools and raising teacher pay to a competitive level are critical to our success as a state.

However, that commitment is not ***realistically reflected*** in HB 222. The Governor's and State Board's goal, which every teacher who attended the public hearings on tiered certification heard this past summer and fall, was that virtually everyone was committed to raising beginning teacher pay over the next five years to \$40,000 and career salaries to \$60,000.

HB 222 moves the target, but only to \$37,000; and next year's increase in beginning pay would only be 1.4%. And it does not include ***every*** teacher who serves our children on the career ladder, only some. **It should not surprise you that teachers are questioning the legislature's true intention with this legislation and funding promises for the coming years.**

The fact is that if HB 222, which modestly increases school funding levels, is threatened ***even in year one*** because many legislators believe it is too rich, educators statewide are rightfully concerned that the money necessary for years two through five will never materialize; we've been here before, you know.

There are elements of the career ladder teacher pay plan the IEA believes *must be modified* to make sure those who are affected will be included in local decisions. As we all know, when people are excluded, there is NO buy-in. This legislation must address the need for teachers to be a part of the local decision, along with their district administrators and trustees, in developing the requirements for how a teacher can earn the leadership and mastery premiums.

Our organizational opposition is primarily the result of our fear that Idaho teachers will, once again, watch as good words and inspiring rhetoric returns to the “let’s do as little as we can” philosophy which our schools have endured for decades. Our solution is simple. Make a *real* five-year commitment to schools, teachers, and kids and show teachers that you honor and value **all** of them and their input about things that affect their profession to which they have dedicated their lives.

When we began this conversation back in 2013, it was about how to attract and retain great teachers. Everyone believes that teachers must be paid more if we are to meet that goal. Why is that important? Why is paying teachers more important? Because it is what Idaho must do to attract and retain great teachers!

Idaho must offer a fair, professional wage that is competitive with the states around us and must respect and include teachers in decisions that affect them and our schools. Our students deserve no less than the best teachers so they can get the best education which they so deserve.