

Senate Education Committee

Thursday, February 22, 2024 - 3:00 P.M.

TESTIMONY ON: All Subjects

Written Testimony

Name (First & Last)	Subject	Manner Testifying	Representing Company/Organization	City	For / Against	Wish to Testify	District #
Kristi Hardy	S 1361	W	self	Kuna	For	N	23

I am in favor of this bill for several reasons. As a concerned parent I have attended almost every school board meeting in Kuna for the last 3 years. During this time I have used the opportunity to voice my opinion on agenda items several times. I appreciate that the school board has allowed this however, on every agenda notice they include the provision that testimony may be permitted at the discretion of the Chairman. To me, this means that at any time, I may be excluded from giving in-person comments. I also support the part of the bill that requires a school board to provide a method for patrons to put an item on the agenda. I help lead a parent action group in Kuna School District, Parents for Policy Change, we have repeatedly requested items of concern to be discussed at board meetings. We have been told to petition the Chairman, then the Chairman told us to ask the Superintendent, then the Superintendent insists only the Chairman can decide, etc. In the end we have been able to get exactly none of our concerns considered or discussed at a public school board meeting. This bill would take some of the confusion away. Please support this bill.

Jim Foudy	S 1361	V	Blaine County School District	Hailey	Against	Y	26
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The following was written by the Blaine County School District Board Chair, Lara Stone, and shared in an email to Senator Carlson.

(Our current system of written comments) offers significant advantages to the in-person verbal method, we have continued with written public comment, rather than verbal:

Outstanding levels of participation from the public. Since implementing this system during COVID, we have received over 850 written public comments - far more than we could ever have heard in board meetings.

Equitable access to the board. Attending a 4-hour board meeting to give public comment on a Tuesday night is extremely difficult for some constituents, including parents with young children, those not comfortable speaking in public, those not fluent in English, and people who work evenings. With written public comment, everyone has equal access to the board and district leaders.

Convenience. Written public comments are convenient. They can be sent at any time of day, in any length, as many times as a constituent wants, from a computer or a cell phone, and in any language.

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Jim Fouady	<i>cont.</i>						26

Better engagement. The board is committed to reading and responding to all public comments. Written public comments provide us with time to reflect on what we've heard well in advance of voting on it. Most importantly, it allows us to engage in a dialogue with constituents, ask questions, clarify misunderstandings, provide additional information, and answer questions.

Transparency for constituents and the press - All public comments and board responses are redacted by the board clerk, if necessary, and then posted on the website prior to the board meeting. The comments are also posted on the board meeting agenda item they pertain to. The PDFs are in a searchable format, making that access much easier than attending or watching a board meeting to find the comments of interest.

Efficient meetings. We do everything we can to make our meetings efficient, so that we have sufficient time to discuss agenda items when they come before the board. Reading public comments and engaging with our community prior to the meeting means every trustee is read in and well prepared for discussion during the public meeting.