

Good afternoon, Chairman Mortimer, Vice-Chairman Thayn and members of the Committee. I am Robin Nettinga, Executive Director of the Idaho Education Association. With me today is the IEA's Director of Public Policy, Matt Compton. Unfortunately, our president Penni Cyr is traveling out of state today and is unable to join us. I know that she is disappointed that she is unable to be here today and looks forward to joining you in the very near future.

Let me first offer our organization's welcome to those returning committee members and to the new members of the committee. On behalf of the members of the Idaho Education Association who live in every local community in Idaho, we look forward to working with you this session to further improve our public education system.

As in past years, Matt, Penni, or I—or several of us—will be with you at each meeting representing our members and offering their perspectives on a variety of issues with which you will be dealing. Please also know that we are happy to provide information and research on just about any K-12 education topic. Please feel free to reach out to one of us. We will be happy to assist you.

The IEA believes that public education is the cornerstone of our social, economic, and political structure. That requires that public education opportunities for every person must be preserved and strengthened and that positive attention be focused on the contributions of public education and education employees.

This session, you will once again be asked to make decisions about very important issues such as accountability, career ladders, tiered certification, student testing, and teacher contract and negotiations law. The members of the IEA have strong opinions on each of these weighty topics, and we'll be here on their behalf representing those views.

As we've watched the number of individuals seeking Idaho teacher certification dip significantly over the past few years, we have become increasingly concerned about our state's ability to recruit and retain a quality teaching staff. We know that the issues of recruitment and retention go much deeper than what an individual is paid.

We know how critically important the teacher is to the achievement levels of his or her students. Consequently, as we consider our positions on legislative and other policy matters, our concern for the impact any such decision will have on the recruitment and retention of teachers weighs heavily on our final decision.

To that end, the IEA is committed to supporting policy decisions and professional practices that retain high quality educators, increase public support for education, lead to improved student success, and ensure authentic representation and buy-in of all stakeholders, including the classroom teacher.

Throughout the interim, the IEA has worked closely with the administrators and school boards association to find common ground on many of the issues. It is our hope that once again this

year, you will find that more often than not, we are in agreement. However, there will also be times when our organizations have agreed to disagree on an issue. In those instances, we will strive to find middle ground, when possible and when that is not possible, we will advocate on behalf of our members.

In closing, thank you for the opportunity to work with you again this session. At the IEA, we pride ourselves on advocating for those issues that our members tell us are important to them. We work diligently to be their voices with you while they are doing the incredibly important work of educating children. While we know that many of you who have been doing this work for some time have educators you go to for information or questions, please know that if you would like for us to help connect you to our members, we would be delighted to help do that.

Thank you.