

Testimony on SB1096 – Parental Rights

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, I'm Jess Harrison, Policy & Government Affairs Director for the Idaho School Boards Association (ISBA). I am here today on behalf of the ISBA, the Idaho Education Association, and the Idaho Association of School Administrators.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of these three education stakeholders.

All three of our organizations stand in opposition to this bill.

This legislation is similar to legislation we saw last year from Representative Trujillo. We saw no need for the legislation last year and we see no need for the legislation again this year. I would like to note that Representative Trujillo is also running a much pared down version of the legislation that has been objected to by the Idaho Supreme Court and the Prosecuting Attorneys Association. That competing version of the parental rights bill, HB113, just narrowly passed the House.

Again, our groups still do not understand the need for this legislation. School districts and charter schools all over the State already comply with many of the provisions outlined in the statute. As the Statement of Purpose acknowledges, federal law requires that school districts have in place parental involvement policies and include notification to parents as well as conduct annual meetings with parents and involve parents, in an organized, ongoing, and timely way, in the planning, review, and improvement of programs.

And we have serious concerns about the additional burden that this legislation will place on districts. If parents are able to lodge unending objections to materials or content and teachers are not allowed to use some material with a student, the fact remains that the student will still need to complete the course and that the teacher and the district will have to come up with alternatives. The district will have to find other resources to use to track the concept, and that costs money and takes time. Thus, we do believe there could be a fiscal impact to the district.

Finally, the Governor's Task Force for Improving Education had a subcommittee tasked with looking at ways that public schools could be provided autonomy from the myriad of legal requirements from the federal government, state government, and administrative agencies.

Schools spend a significant amount of staff time keeping up with compiling and sometimes conflicting regulations and mandates. This law will add one more layer of regulation that we believe is unnecessary and, as Mr. Stark of the IEA will address for you shortly, could open the district up to litigation and liability.

For these reasons, we ask that you hold SB1096 in Committee. With that, Mr. Chairman, I am glad to stand for any questions.

Parental Involvement

1. As required by NCLB § 1118(b): Parents shall be notified of the parental involvement policy, in an understandable and uniform format and, to the extent practicable, in a language the parents can understand. Such policy shall be made available to the local community and updated periodically to meet the changing needs of parents and the school.
2. As required by NCLB § 1118(c): Each school shall:
 - A. Convene an annual meeting at a convenient time, to which all parents of participating children shall be invited and encouraged to attend, to inform parents of their school's participation and to explain the requirements of NCLB and the right of the parents to be involved;
 - B. Offer a flexible number of meetings;
 - C. Involve parents, in an organized, ongoing, and timely way, in the planning, review, and improvement of programs, including the planning, review, and improvement of the school parental involvement policy and the joint development of the school-wide program plan under § 1114(b)(2);
 - D. Provide parents of participating children:
 - I. Timely information about programs under this part;
 - II. A description and explanation of the curriculum in use at the school, the forms of academic assessment used to measure student progress, and the proficiency levels students are expected to meet; and
 - III. If requested by parents, opportunities for regular meetings to formulate suggestions and to participate, as appropriate, in decisions relating to the education of their children, and respond to any such suggestions as soon as practicably possible.