

**TESTIMONY FOR SENATE EDUCATION
SB1248**

Mr. Chair, members of the Committee. My name is Karen Echeverria. I am the Executive Director of the Idaho School Boards Association. I'm here today representing school districts, charter schools, and the Board members who govern them.

As a reminder, in November of 2014, the members of the Idaho School Boards Association voted with over a 90% passage rate to include charter schools as full members of our association. We are still the only state in the nation to have done so. As part of their membership, charter schools hold two seats on the ISBA Executive Board and are represented on our Governmental Affairs Committee.

Our Governmental Affairs Committee makes decisions, and provides guidance, on legislation on which ISBA has not previously taken a position. That is the case with the legislation before you today. ISBA stands in opposition to SB1248 and would ask that you hold this bill in committee. I think it is important to note that the charter school members represented on our Board are those most vocal about their opposition to this legislation.

In addition, I did poll our charter schools. I did not receive as good a response as I had hoped but of the 13 charter schools that responded, they were opposed to the legislation by a 3-1 margin.

There are several issues with this legislation that I would like to address. First of all from the charter school perspective:

- First of all, we have all heard about the teacher shortage that exists in our Idaho public schools. We believe that removing the continuing contract ability in charter schools will make it even more difficult for charter schools to attract and retain good teachers and will put charter schools at a distinct disadvantage.
- Secondly, charter schools are public schools. Therefore, teachers in charter schools are also public school teachers. They are part of the PERSI retirement system and are paid on the same Career Ladder as all other public school teachers. To now suddenly tell charter school teachers that

they are not entitled to the same rights and privileges as all other teachers is a disservice to them. They deserve to be treated the same as all other teachers and to be afforded the same rights under the same contract.

- As one of my charter school members stated, “Laws that relax accountability for charter schools open the way for unethical behavior. In the public eye, all charter schools are the same. When one charter school does something that is not in the best interest of its students or teachers, the public thinks that all charter schools are going to do the same thing.”

From the traditional school perspective:

- We believe that there could be some huge contractual issues that are not addressed in this legislation. Questions about the transfer of a teacher from a traditional school or a charter school or from a charter to a traditional. What occurs with a teacher’s continuing contract? Does it remain in place? Does it terminate? Does the traditional school acknowledge the years of service when the teacher transfers from a charter school?
- What happens to teachers who are currently on a continuing contract? If a charter school decides to do away with continuing contract, what happens to that teacher? They have a property that cannot just be terminated. Will the charter school be expected to have some teachers on a continuing contract and some that aren’t?

There may be answers to all of these questions but they are not answered in this legislation. We need to have these questions answered and confirmation that our current charter school teachers will be protected. We need to ensure that we always respect the teachers in both our traditional and charter schools and provide for an easy transition between both.

Because we value the teachers in our districts and our charter schools and because we think that this legislation does not answer all of questions we have posed, we would, once again ask that you hold this bill in committee.

Thank you Mr. Chair and members of the committee. I appreciate your time today and we would be glad to stand for any questions.