

TESTIMONY FOR SENATE EDUCATION RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

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

I would like to take a minute and introduce two of my colleagues who will also be staffing this committee this year. Quinn Perry is our Policy and Governmental Affairs Director and replaces Jess Harrison. Some of you may recognize Quinn from her previous work with the Idaho Trial Lawyers Association. Misty Swanson is our Deputy Director and has worked for ISBA for 12 years. You will see at least one of us in each of your meetings.

Thank you asking us to respond to your questions related to student achievement.

To address your question about what we are doing differently to address student achievement and growth, I want to focus on effective school Boards. There is significant research through the Iowa Lighthouse Project and from education experts and authors Tom Alsbury and Phil Gore that effective Boards have a definitive positive impact on student achievement.

Dr. Tom Alsbury, at Northwestern University, conducted a study that compared district political and apolitical board turnover, combined with targeted training, to student performance change on the state criterion-referenced test. Results showed student test scores decline as board turnover increased and Board training decreased. Conversely, student performance increased where Board training had increased.

As you know, the legislature appropriated funds for school boards and superintendents and charter administrators to receive training. This past year ISBA provided training all over the state to numerous school Boards to assist them in becoming more informed by providing them with data about the students in their district, to be more effective, and to understand their roles and responsibilities. In addition, we provided numerous workshops at our Annual

Convention specifically related to student achievement. We had over 500 school Board members, superintendents and administrators at the Convention.

We believe that school Boards are more informed today than they ever have been in years past. The data they have at their fingertips allows them to make better informed decisions that will assist the students in their districts to improve on achievement and growth.

That leads me into your second question about two things that we would like to do that would further enhance student achievement and growth. We actually only have one thing. That is where all of you come in. One of the K12 Education Task Force recommendations was to remove all the line items and allow school districts and charter schools to be more creative and reactive to their student's needs.

As you all know, we have long supported local governance – the ability for school districts and charter schools to make decisions at a local level that are best for their students. Because of the training that Boards have received that have provided them with the skills and data they need, we believe they are more ready than ever for the legislature to take the step and start removing line items from the budget.

We know that decisions about students are best made closest to the student. Districts and charters know what is most needed in their individual communities to increase student achievement. By removing the line items, providing the funding to the school district or charter school as a lump sum of money, and allowing them to make these decisions on a local level, we believe that student achievement will increase.

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