



February 8, 2018

To: Senate Education Committee members

From: Deborah Pence

RE: S1267

The bill under review to set a criteria for students to earn a STEM high school diploma is a step in the right direction for students across the state of Idaho. I have been working with students for many years as they attempt to transition successfully to postsecondary education. Having students place into freshman English has not posed a significant hurdle; on the whole, we do a pretty good job of preparing students to read, write, and speak as they are required to take 8 semester credits of English and one additional credit in Public Speaking. However, placement into freshman-level math and success in college-level lab sciences has proven more elusive. This bill encourages students to take classes that will address this gap and make that transition smoother.

I believe this bill would accomplish a few key goals: 1) Setting a clear criteria for students desiring to achieve more from their high school experience without a need to take any more than the current 46 credits, 2) Send a message to industry that Idaho is serious about creating a talent pipeline in STEM skills by fostering foundational skills in high school, 3) Encouraging all students to gain the math and science knowledge necessary to make a successful transition to postsecondary education, and 4) Allow students to earn a STEM diploma that carries a clear designation to businesses and postsecondary institutions that the graduate has met a higher standard than the traditional high school diploma. These are clear benefits that will help our students and the economic future of our state, with no fiscal impact. I encourage you to pass this legislation as it is written.