

Chairman, committee members –

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today concerning the funding formula and senate bill 1196. I wanted to thank you for taking the time to review this legislation, to learn about how education is funded in Idaho and how this proposed model will provide funding for the schools and charters throughout the state.

While I am grateful for the time you have spent, I cannot support this legislation and the excel spreadsheet that has been developed.

Budget

I heard during a presentation last Thursday that was given by Michael Griffith that the new model provides LEA's a better tool for budgeting. I respectfully disagree with his statement. Under our current funding model I can calculate what additional students will mean to our district, how much discretionary funding we will receive and also how much we can anticipate in funding for staff. It is our **current model** that allows me to do this. Under the proposed model budgeting will become immensely more difficult. Due to the floating base, meaning the base changes based on enrollment across the state, appropriation set by the legislature, and students within each of the weightings, I will not be able to truly figure out my revenues until the final payment of the year in June. Because my funding is impacted by both my enrollment, and the enrollment of my peers across the state, I cannot know whether our enrollment growth will be funded completely, and the impact of gained or lost students on our funding streams. This will require us to be more conservative, to push off larger purchases until further on in the year or delay them indefinitely until I can ensure that the funding is available. It will limit our ability to hire teachers and para-professionals, purchase curriculum, and the other necessary supplies our kids need to be successful.

Additionally, the protections that were identified in previous versions of draft legislation, protections that are available in our current funding model, protections that ensure an organization will receive no less funding than what is received in October, are missing from Senate Bill 1196, further making budgeting and the planning for enrollment changes extremely difficult.

During that same presentation I heard discussion from the committee that the changes in the proposed formula would not impact how districts hire teachers. There was a belief and a hope that educational leaders would hire the more experienced teacher, no matter how they are funded. Under our current system that is exactly how decisions are made. The impact the teacher will have on the budget is not a part of the decision-making process, but instead we hire based on what is best for our students. By receiving funding based on the experience level of our teachers, and their placement on the career ladder, we are effectively removing budget from the hiring process. Under this proposed model that will not be the case. While districts and charters will try their best to make decisions based on the needs of their students, there will come a time, perhaps not now, but soon, when a decision will be made not based on the needs of the students but instead the availability of one's budget.

Spreadsheet

The funding model developed by ECS, the spreadsheet, provides a comparison of 17-18 funding under the current model to effectively 19-20 under the proposed model. In essence we are comparing one years funding under one model to how it will look more than two years later under a new model. Being displayed this way makes it very difficult for districts to identify whether the formula positively or negatively impacts them. How are we to support or argue this legislation without understanding its impact on our district, and more importantly, our kids.

The excel spreadsheet posted on the web shows that West Ada will have an increase of \$11.7 million dollars. Remember though, this increase is over two years. This \$11 million dollar increase is effectively a 5.5 percent increase over two years, much less than the eleven plus percent West Ada has enjoyed under the current formula.

What you have heard is that with the hold harmless applied, all districts will receive more funding. While that is true, more funding might not be greater than what we are receiving under the current funding formula. The opportunity cost, the difference in revenues between the current and proposed model could be as much as \$8 million dollars annually for West Ada. You won't see this in the spreadsheet posted on-line, but only through analyzing the effects of the current and proposed model across each year can you see this. Eight million dollars is 4 percent of our budget. Without receiving these funds we can't hire the approximately 40 more teachers and numerous para-professionals our classrooms need, bring in the best curriculum, and help our students become the leaders of tomorrow we all know and want them to be.

Next Steps

As I have said, I am grateful for the countless hours you have put in, and for the time you have spent away from your families working on education funding. It is through your hard work that education funding has taken a prominent role in this legislative session. However, I think we have learned that this model needs time and additional work. I would encourage you to wait, not move forward with legislation that could adversely impact our kids but instead take the time to ensure that the model that we end up adopting will work for all of the children of Idaho like our current one has.

Thank you for your time and for your consideration. I stand for any questions you have.

Respectfully Submitted

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