

Senate State & Local Government Committee Testimony

Feb 28, 2018

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen of the Committee. My name is Stephanie Winkler and I'm a fourth grade teacher on leave from the Madison County School District currently serving as the President of the Kentucky Education Association.

I'd like to speak to you today about the detrimental effects that SB 1 will have on our public school students and the communities they live in.

The kids of the Commonwealth depend on their public schools and the people that work in them for a variety of needs.

- They need administrators, teachers, and education support professionals that set limits and use positive discipline to help them understand cause and effect, and consequences of their actions
- They need interventionists and therapists to help them navigate difficult text, so that they can read for meaning and comprehend details in a piece of informational text.
- They need to be taught superior math skills so they can be prepared for careers that will allow them to analyze, evaluate, and solve difficult problems.

You see, all of these skills are taught by public school employees every day. And because we teach them we understand these skills- well.

We understand that if SB 1 is passed in to law the consequences of its contents will have an enormous negative impact on the quality of education we will be able to provide our students.

This bill takes away promises made to public school employees when they were hired or when they retired. Everyone in education knows that if you make a promise to a student, you better keep it. If you don't, they will never let you forget it-ever.

Our communities depend on retired teachers to thrive. The financial impact, retiree spending habits have on local business is enormous. But aside from just a financial impact, think about your own local community. Retirees can be found as volunteers in hospitals, libraries, schools, soup kitchens, churches, in every community across Kentucky. They spent their entire career contributing to their pension system to ensure that they would have a guaranteed COLA when they retired. They paid for it, they earned, and it makes me mad that anyone would consider breaking that promise.

One fact that I can't get out of my head is the number of Kentucky teachers that are eligible to retire today. Our public schools struggle every day to attract or retain qualified educators to work with our kids. We must work together to do everything we can to assure education is an attractive profession for future generations. This legislation is 289 pages long. It's a small novel that when read carefully has details that will result in a really bad ending.

As an education community we came together and offered legislators our ideas on how to solve our pension problems. We've done the math on this proposal, and it doesn't add up. We respectfully request that lawmakers reach out to those groups that will be the most directly impacted by this bill and let's work together to get this assignment right.