

Madam Chairwoman and members of the committee, thank you for allowing us to testify today in support of House Bills 5223 and 5224.

I would like to thank Rep. O'Brien for bringing together a very diverse group of stakeholders and giving each of us an opportunity to be heard. No one got everything they wanted in this legislation. But because of her inclusive process she kept the focus on, "What's best for kids", and came up with a product that is geared toward Michigan's children, not any individual organization's wish list. For example, these bills don't address MEA's concerns on labor issues or bargaining. We come to you today in support of these bills, however, because they do provide a path whereby teachers can become better teachers; and that is in the best interest of kids.

The Michigan Council on Educator Effectiveness set up pilot programs in 13 different districts. MEA lobbyists visited our members in eight of those districts to secure their input on the process in their districts. Using that information, we were able to offer to the work group our members' insights as to what worked and what didn't work. For example, our members loved the self-reflection this process caused. We all get busy doing our jobs and rarely take the time to really reflect on all aspects of the job. This process forced them to take the time to do that. They also liked the opportunity to talk about and improve upon their professional practice. Engaging with their administrators on these issues energized and inspired them.

While they all accept the need for accountability, they felt that 50% of the evaluation being based on student growth, as measured by one high stakes test, was too much and that without an established statewide test, it was all happening too soon. The bills push back the percentage of student growth three years so that it doesn't hit the 50% range until 2017. And student growth is no longer based only on one high stakes test. Local assessments and student learning objectives are also allowed as measures of growth.

Through our conversations with our members, it became obvious that the system worked best when it was done by administrators who had been trained by the vendors. That is why vendor training is in the bill. Unfortunately, it also became clear that the process can be used to reward teachers who are "favorites" of the principals or punish those teachers who might be at the top of the pay scale when a district wants to cut costs. To prevent as much of this arbitrary behavior as possible, several things were added to the bill. First, there is an appeals process. Teachers who feel they have received an unfair evaluation may appeal to the Superintendent. We believe that an appeal process to an independent expert would be better, but there is at least some recourse for those who believe the evaluation is

unfair. Second, Administrators will be evaluated, in part, on how well they do teacher evaluations. If they are misusing the evaluation process, it is our hope that it will come to light during their evaluations.

One of the biggest challenges of this process was finding the right balance between state and local control. While it may not be perfect, we have done our best to come up with a system that provides strong state guidelines but allows for local input. For example, districts are allowed to choose from one of four evaluation tools. A district can also use a tool it has created, as long as it meets the detailed criteria spelled out in the bill. And we didn't just pull the criteria out of a hat. It's the basic outline of what is needed for an evaluation tool to be effective based upon the best practices in the field today.

As you continue your discussion on this legislation, I ask you to keep one thing in mind. The reforms passed in 2011 are moving forward with or without this legislation. Next year, growth will be 40% of a teacher's evaluation if these bills aren't passed. Evaluations are being done and layoffs occurring based on those evaluations without adequate training of administrators and without a useful standardized, statewide test to measure student growth. Teachers are being held accountable for student growth, but administrators aren't. And make no mistake, administrators have a large impact on student and teacher success.

Like Rep. O'Brien and Zempe said last week, we are open to ideas and suggestions. We just hope that any changes maintain the integrity of the bills and are "what's best for kids".