

Chairman Heinart and Education Committee Board Members,

My name is Michelle Simonson and I have been teaching in Alexander for 35 years. During my time at Alexander Public School, I have seen many changes and been involved in many aspects of the school. I am speaking today because it frustrates me greatly that politicians who have no background in education think they know what's best for us.

Small schools are the heart of a community. The opportunities that we have available are due greatly because of superintendents who know how to engage our communities to help support those opportunities. I have worked with very forward thinking superintendents that have always looked for ways to keep us at the forefront and on the cutting edge of what is coming down the pipe even ahead of the larger districts in our state.

As stated in the ad HB 1251 is going to be a way to give small schools opportunities that they otherwise wouldn't have. I disagree with this. Our superintendents have supported our students and have looked for opportunities to have our students shine. We currently have an FTC team that has qualified for state, and have had other teams in the past 4 years also qualify with one qualifying for nationals. Prior to that we had a Robotics team that qualified for nationals from 2002-2004. Both these examples also came home with hardware. We have also had several students that have qualified and placed at the national science fair. But yet our students don't have opportunities because we are small? This isn't just true in our high school but also our elementary and middle school. We started an FLL robotics program last year and our teams have qualified both years. Our superintendent's priorities have always been to put our students first and allow them these opportunities. My FEAR is that if HB 1251 were to pass would our students still be allowed the same opportunities, without the support of the superintendent? Let's be honest, not all superintendents have a vested interest nor the same philosophy as to how or where the school monies are spent.

Also in the ad, you state that small schools will be able to "choose" the school or schools that they will be sharing a superintendent with, just like we do for extra-curricular activities. However, in the language of the bill it is stated that

the state will assign the superintendent for the districts that are below the magic number of 475. So, I'm curious which is it? And really if we have to have a superintendent for every 475 students shouldn't we really be adding more to the larger schools so they can do justice and give all their students more opportunities because they know their students better. Oh, wait that's small schools again.... Superintendents know their students and staff personally.

Now let's talk about how much money the school district patrons will be saving by not having a superintendent. I didn't realize that their salary cost the taxpayers more than the operation of the school building. And how about those teacher raises. One ad states that we will receive \$4800. While another states that it may be closer to \$9000. Again. How does a district's superintendent salary really add that much to teacher salaries?

I really believe that we need to take a closer look at the wordage between what HB 1251 really says and the ads that are circulating as they are very misleading. Do your due diligence and stop this bill. Superintendents are the backbone of the small school. Their leadership is essential for student success. When we get right down to it, HB 1251 is a threat to THAT success.

Respectfully,

Michelle Simonson

3rd Grade Teacher

Alexander Education Association President