

Bill HB 1251

Taryn Sweet

Testimony in Opposition

Good morning, Chairman Representative Heinert, members of the Education Committee, for the record, my name is Taryn Sweet and I am here today in my role as Secondary Principal for Beach High School to explain why I would appreciate a do not pass on HB 1251.

Beach High School serves the educational needs for Beach School District 7-12 and Lone Tree School District 9-12 students. We also serve the student population placed with Home on the Range. Even if we combined with our two closest schools, Lone Tree, and Billings County, which are K-8 schools, we would not meet the criteria of 475. We would still need another school. That means two counties at least would be under one Superintendent. Geographically that is a large area to cover. This would take away fiscal control from local school boards, districts, communities, and counties.

We recently hired a Superintendent at Beach, one of the questions asked was if they felt that visibility in the community mattered. Superintendents are expected to go to functions, know their towns/areas, local businesses and be an active member of the community. Our administrative team goes to meetings at city hall, chamber meetings, county meetings and are members of improvement boards. They work hard to create partnerships with local businesses and with our constituents. We are also often the largest employer in the city and sometimes county. In rural towns, the school is the lifeblood of a community.

Contrary to what the advertisements say, this will affect Principals and Business Managers. I cannot speak for other districts but in my district, I am the social worker, SRO, Family Engagement Specialist, Teaching and Learning Director, Curriculum Director, Cognia Expert, along with for me, Volleyball Coach and Close-Up Advisor. We oversee the educational needs for Home on the Range which often presents us with a unique situation to manage. I know many of my peers are also athletic/activities directors. In small schools, we already wear multiple hats. This would force us to have to wear more hats, or force teachers to take on some admin duties. The work would still need to be done. Some schools have consolidated Superintendent and Secondary Principal or combined the Principal position into a K-12. But that was determined as a need or what was best for the community by the local school board.

Administrators' jobs are so much more than the budget. They oversee ensuring that policies are followed. We also manage when they are not being followed to ensure the school complies with federal and state regulations. This is an important management side of school administration that could potentially cost the district and taxpayers a great deal of money if not handled properly. My job as Principal is to be visible in the classrooms and hallways. We are needed by staff and students alike to listen, help, and mentor. Adding more work burdens would take us away from being in the classrooms and hallways. It would make it difficult to keep providing quality services to children. We are a team that works for the best benefit of our kids and the communities we serve. The Superintendent is a strong part of our team.

Thank you for your time. I would appreciate a "do not pass" on HB 1251. I stand for any questions.