

March 8, 2021

To: Members of the Indiana General Assembly
From: East Central School Study Council

The East Central School Study Council in coordination with the Indiana Small Rural Schools Association is writing to express our opposition to House Bill 1005 and Senate Bill 413. Senate Bill 412 is currently dead, but we also oppose the contents of this bill if it were to reappear later in the session. These proposed bills would significantly harm public education around the state as they divert much needed funding away from public schools to private entities. These bills are incompatible with the recent Next Level Teacher Compensation Commission recommendations and will have long lasting adverse effects on public schools, specifically small rural schools. We respectfully ask each of you to vote no on these bills and direct your attention to supporting many of the recommendations outlined in the Next Level Teacher Compensation Commission's report.

Limits to teacher compensation hinder our ability to attract and retain talented educators within the teaching profession. The Next Level Teacher Compensation Commission's report states it would take an additional \$600 million to become competitive with our regional counterparts. Indiana's HB 1005, SB 412, and SB 413 divert much needed funding away from the State's tuition support appropriation allotted to public schools, which could be used to compensate teachers and expand programming for students. As the Commission report states, "the data is clear: Indiana has significant challenges in attracting and retaining qualified teachers." We reap what we sow.

Over ninety percent of Indiana students attend our public schools. As Michael Hicks aptly pointed out in his recent article "Teacher Pay is the Symptom of Deeper Problems" at http://www.dailyjournal.net/2021/03/02/michael_hicks_teacher_pay_is_the_symptom_of_deeper_problems/ all Hoosiers should be interested in the recommendations of the Next Level Teacher Compensation Committee. The push by the General Assembly for voucher expansion for the wealthy and establishing educational savings accounts deplete significant resources available to public schools and teachers, with little to zero accountability to how public taxpayer dollars are being spent. The lack of accountability for these public taxpayer funds coupled with the disproportionate amount of money diverted away from public education is extremely distressing to all public school superintendents and educators.

Many of the school corporations represented by this letter serve rural communities. Public schools are the lifeblood of these areas and a vital part of their economic development. After adjusting for inflation, Indiana's spending per pupil has fallen by more than seven percent over the past 10 years. Indiana's per pupil expenditure ranking has fallen nationally from 22nd in 2004 to 36th in 2018. The decisions made related to these bills have the potential to deplete resources further, causing long-term harm to local schools and the communities they serve.

We respectfully ask that each of you reject all three bills due to the harmful long-term educational and economic damage to public education and by extension small communities throughout Indiana.

Respectfully,

Rolland Abraham, Randolph Central School Corporation
Kyle Barrentine, Nettle Creek School Corporation
Jediah Behny, Charles A. Beard Memorial School Corporation
Aaron Black, Randolph Eastern School Corporation
Aron Borowiak, Union County College Corner Joint School District
Donnie Bowsman, Randolph Southern School Corporation
Melissa Brisco, Alexandria Community School Corporation
Joe Brown, Elwood Community School Corporation
Timothy Brown, Cowan Community School Corporation
Eric Creviston, Blue River Valley Schools
Chad Cripe, Oak Hill United School Corporation
Scott Deetz, Madison-Grant United School Corporation
Bobby Fields, Frankton-Lapel Community Schools
Ron Green, Shenandoah School Corporation
Matthew Hicks, Northeastern Wayne Schools
Greg Hinshaw, Yorktown Community Schools
Michael Huber, Union School Corporation
Katie Lash, East Central Educational Service Center
Joel Mahaffey, Adams Central Community Schools
Reece Mann, Delaware Community School Corporation
Mikel McCoy, Centerville-Abington Community Schools
Kyle Mealy, Wes-Del Community Schools
Adrian Moulton, Monroe Central School Corporation
Jennifer O'Brien, Richmond Community Schools
Dave Pfaff, Eastern Hancock County Community School Corporation
George Philhower, Western Wayne Schools
Bryan Rausch, Liberty-Perry Community School Corporation
Greg Roach, Blackford County Schools
Matt Vance, Rush County Schools
Chad Yencer, Blackford County Schools