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Testimony of Brian D. Smith
IN OPPOSITION TO HB 2486 - CREATING THE
SCHOOL DISTRICT BOND REVIEW PROJECT
Before the House Education Committee
February 1, 2016

I am writing this testimony to explain my opposition to House Bill 2486. I believe House Bill 2486 is detrimental to districts like my own, and create an unfair advantage for wealthier districts. I also believe it could lead to unnecessary litigation which I know the Legislature would like to avoid. Another concern is that this process could become political, and it would give very large districts an advantage over smaller rural districts.

The Galena School District assessed valuation is \$16,868,496. Our headcount enrollment is 836, and our mill levy is 59.665 mills. The Burlington School District has an assessed valuation of \$397,850,753. Their headcount enrollment is 852, and their mill levy is 28.527 mills. As you can see, Galena taxpayers are paying more than their fair share of taxes. Although this bill does provide some equalization, it is only for very basic architectural design and areas that are utilized for direct instruction. The language on these two issues is vague and could be interpreted in many different ways. The bill creates many questions which I fear would eventually be addressed through unnecessary litigation. Wealthy school districts, like Burlington, gain a huge advantage in this situation. With just a few mills, they could create a much better learning environment for their students as compared to districts like Galena. This would place both students and taxpayers of low wealth districts at a huge disadvantage. In other words, your zip code will determine the quality of your facilities.

Another major concern is the possibility of political interests influencing the decision made by the committee. Our school district has a population of around 4000 citizens. We do not have a lot of influence from a political perspective in comparison to large school districts. I fear that the districts with more political influence might have an advantage in the review

board process. This again could lead to more inequities. I believe the old law prior to 2014-15 worked very well, and it provided equity for all districts. I recommend we return to that law.

The Galena School District has never taken part in any litigation. We prefer to work out our differences through the legislative process. That is why I chose to testify. I believe we can work together to do what is best for all students regardless of where they reside. I hope that proves to be true.