

Testimony to Committee on Commerce
SB 469
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Chairwoman Lynn and Members of the Committee

I appreciate the opportunity to present written testimony concerning SB 469. A few months ago I had the responsibility to serve on a joint legislative Commission (Commission) whose charge was to suggest improvements in fiscal management of school districts. We took hours and hours of testimony from superintendents, principals, State Education Department leaders, union leadership, school board members and their association, and many other individuals and organizations. It was a very intense process.

An issue which was discussed by the Commission as a whole was the relationship between school districts and teacher representation. Multiple times we heard that limiting the items to be negotiated in contracts between districts and representation would be beneficial for district leadership to have more control. The Commission as a whole did not include a recommendation for changing the state laws concerning negotiation because assurances were given by teacher representation, school board association and others that they would get together and limit the scope of negotiated items, but the Minority Report did. It appears as of this date that promise was not kept in a manner that would give district leadership the control they need for fiscal management.

The need for a change to occur in the relationship between teacher representation and the districts remains a significant opportunity for increased fiscal management of districts. Superintendents and school boards should have substantial control over the districts largest expense. SB 469 provides an avenue for changing the relationship which has existed for years. It is my opinion that the process needs to be changed, an opinion that was formed based on testimony received as a member of the Commission.

Associated with the passage of legislation such as SB 469 may very well be the opportunity to address in meaningful manner significant efficiencies which will lead to an increase of dollars going to the classroom. And, by the way, I consider teachers a critical element of the classroom. Holding representation accountable by yearly certification should significantly improve the product being delivered to the teachers. At least, if I were a teacher, that's what I would expect to happen as I am asked annually to approve the process.

In conclusion, my testimony is not about taking anything away from teachers. I recommend that SB 469 can begin a significant reinvention of how education becomes more efficient and accountable.

