May 10, 2016

The Honorable Tom Wolf
Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
225 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120

Dear Governor Wolf:

As the prime sponsors of the Protecting Excellent Teachers Act in the House of Representatives and Senate, we are writing to you concerning House Bill 805, which has now passed both chambers of the General Assembly and will soon be presented to you for your consideration.

While you have initially indicated that you intend to veto this important public school reform legislation, we believe that, notwithstanding the misleading objections that have been advanced by some concerning this measure, House Bill 805 deserves your full consideration, particularly because of your goal to ensure that Pennsylvania has "schools that teach."

Governor, indisputable research and common sense informs us that the most influential factor in a school child's education is the quality of the teacher in their classroom.

Having the best, most effective educators teaching our children promotes the greatest opportunity for individual student success and it maximizes the substantial public investments we are making in schools. Highly effective teachers not only teach - they inspire and transform students through learning experiences that make a lifetime of difference for young people.

House Bill 805's goal is simple - protect those teachers that we know are outstanding from being furloughed in the unfortunate event schools must downsize their complement.

Absent House Bill 805, the alternative is today's current reality – that highly effective educators, by operation of Pennsylvania law, could be displaced by furlough in favor of ineffective teachers that have been rated as "needing improvement" or worse yet, "failing."

As leaders, we cannot - *and you should not* - endorse a system that promotes "failing" teachers over "distinguished" educators.

If we genuinely want high performing schools where every child has an opportunity to experience earned success, we cannot allow the vestiges of a system that protects low-performing educators to remain.

The Protecting Excellent Teachers Act is designed to carefully balance the many competing interests involved in this issue.

While removing teacher seniority as the sole factor in determining furloughs, it replaces it with a more thoughtful and appropriate system that rightfully considers an educator's performance. Where two teachers have similar performance measures, longevity would correctly be the deciding factor.

The people of our Commonwealth, our school administrators, school boards, parents and students all know that this policy makes much more sense and will produce far better results than allowing the current law to remain, which simply relies on how long an educator has served in the school government system.

Governor, we have an opportunity to set aside the special interests that have for far too long strangled efforts to fundamentally address those issues which prevent our schools from succeeding.

The failure to overcome the self-interests of adults to the detriment of children is not just an education issue, it is a social justice and economic one as well, and it can no longer be tolerated. Surely history will judge the choice of who we stand with – "failing" teachers, or "excellent" teachers and the children and parents they so effectively serve.

We believe this issue is of such importance and consequence that we are requesting a meeting with you to further discuss House Bill 805, prior to your receiving the bill once it is signed in the House of Representatives and Senate.

Please contact us at your earliest convenience to schedule a meeting. In the end, government systems - including public schools - should never seek to protect themselves at the expense of those that they are intended to serve. The people of Pennsylvania, and especially our school children deserve better than that.

Sincerely,

STEPHEN BLOOM
State Representative
199th House District

RYAN P. AUMENT
State Senator
36th Senatorial District

SB/RPA/jgs