

Comment Report

Education

Date: 01/18/2024

Time: 01:00 PM

Location: RM 102, Sup. Ct. Consult

Name: Wendy Parker

Comment: Special Education Only AEAs are Bad for Iowa
<https://rapaciouslearning.org/specialeducationonlyaeasisbadforiowa/>

Name: Wendy Parker

Comment: Letter to Legislators about AEAs
<https://rapaciouslearning.org/aealettertolegislators/>

Name: Meredith Hughes

Comment: I OPPOSE HSB542 as it is currently written. I fear there is a substantial lack of understanding as to how our AEAs function and the amount of support we, as special education staff, receive from ALL of our departments. We are an interdisciplinary team of highly trained professionals. As a speech language pathologist, I utilize many of the services this bill proposes to eliminate from our agency. It is absurd to suggest that the removal of these services (e.g., media/tech) will not have a direct and highly negative impact on our ability to perform our duties as special education service providers. All students, including those with IEPs, are general education students first. We rely on our general education staff to help us identify student need, determine appropriate interventions (MTSS), and collaborate to compile the necessary data to support these students across settings. AEAs have evolved to expand beyond the scope of special education because that is what has been required of us to do to support the districts we serve. To suggest that we have grown beyond our intended operation is also insulting. Having been reduced from 15 original AEAs to just 9 suggests otherwise. I am very concerned that the information provided is inaccurate and does not provide you with the necessary data to make an informed decision, especially one that will be so impactful to the state of our education system. While we have been in operation for 50+ years, we undergo accreditation and as of our most recent review, we remain compliant. Can we do more? Absolutely. And we welcome suggestions and evidence based corrective action plans, similar to the ones we design with our districts, superintendents, and direct support staff. In my current role, I routinely collaborate with OTs, PTs, Early Childhood teachers, Gen Ed consultants, social workers, school psychologists, media, print, family advocacy, literacy coaches, audiology, administrative assistants, and more. These staff are essential in how I support my students and families throughout our community and within their respective schools. These are not positions that should be cut, nor should they be contracted as a fee for hire contract position. Educational practitioners like myself adhere to strict guideline regarding eligibility, compliance regarding FAPE, LRE, IFSP and IEP compliance, Child Find, Full and Individual Evaluations, etc. Private practice and medical based SLPs and similar practitioners, while holding the same credentials, degrees, and specializations, are not equipped nor trained, to deliver the same services required in our schools. While I wholeheartedly support an increase in teacher pay, it should not be tied to this bill. It seems very deliberate, intended to divide schools and AEAs at a time when we need each other most. Teachers need AEAs. Teachers deserve a raise. We can have both. Please take the time to listen to those of us doing the work, those of us with years of experience in the field, and those of us who continue to advocate with the same passion we advocate for our students. Please reconsider HSB542. Thank you for your time

Name: Kim Engelstad

Comment: As a school psychologist for the MBAEA, my current assignment is within the Davenport Community School District. I provide services to a local public and a nonpublic school. The students with IEPs at the nonpublic school attend the public school I serve. I am responsible for evaluating students to determine if they are eligible for special education services. I also support the teachers in developing their IEPs. The staff at the nonpublic school rely on the knowledge that I, and the AEA literacy consultant, have to provide professional development and effective instructional strategies. We also assist with developing an effective intervention system for both academics and behavior. Without ALL services provided by the AEA, nonpublic schools will also struggle to meet students' needs. Please vote NO on this bill!

Name: Kevin Fischer

Comment: AEA was an invaluable resource after my young son's heart surgery. They tested and then guided us on physical, mental, and developmental issues he faced and we can never repay them for their help. He is 19 now and the people who helped him at our AEA still check in on us on their own and have become lifelong friends. I hope others can experience AEA like we were lucky enough to. They got us through a very tough time and we will never forget!

Name: Kerri Schwemm

Comment: I applaud Governor Reynolds for wanting to get Iowa back to the top in the nation for education. She has called for a comprehensive review. A comprehensive review needs to be just that. Comprehensive. This includes a REVIEW of current, relevant, accurate data, processes and facts gathered from multiple sources; INTERVIEWS with multiple individuals who have first hand knowledge of the issue; OBSERVATIONS of the current processes and structures in action (preferably in multiple settings); and if necessary specific TASKS/TESTS done with fidelity to help determine how change will impact the issue. The RIOT process outlined above is what we do as highly trained educators when there are concerns about a student's progress, so that we can make an informed recommendation for a high stakes matter. The level of the concern guides the rigor of the RIOT process. If we apply this process to the process for passing legislation, the proposals in HSB542 require and deserve the utmost rigor. Anything less is an insult to our democracy and an insult to the tens of thousands of educators, families, and children who will ultimately be the victims. A piece of this bill, Teacher base Salary increase, is equally entitled to the attention it deserves. Governor Reynolds knows we need to attract teachers to Iowa split the bill and ensure sustained salary increase. However, throwing more money at a problem won't fix it all by itself. To attract and keep quality teachers, Iowa needs to be able to support them at a level for them to teach at the top of their license. The AEAs have helped to do that, and can only continue to do so if there is uninterrupted service delivery.

Name: Sandi Sickels

Comment: I am writing to share my opposition to HSB542, the Governor's bill on the AEAS. Special education and general education do not work in silos in Iowa. The vast majority of children with disabilities receiving special education services and supports receive core instruction in math, reading, science, social studies, and technology, etc. in the general education classroom. Classroom teachers need professional development and onsite support for implementation of instructional strategies from AEA staff with expertise and knowledge of current research on best practices in these curricular areas. They need materials from AEA media to support their instruction. They need expertise from mental health providers to learn and use trauma informed classroom practices. These services, and many more, are provided effectively and efficiently to all districts regardless of ability of districts to fund them on their own. If HSB542 is allowed to pass, none of these services will be available

to teachers. Districts in rural areas, such as Creston, will only be able to receive these services if they can transfer funding from the state level to the local level through increased property taxes. This means that my family will either see a huge increase in our property taxes, as a farming household, or my granddaughters will go without needed services to receive the best education possible. Neither of these options is acceptable to me. Currently districts are allowed to engage in Operational Sharing with the AEA for services such as mental health therapy by highly qualified Masters level social workers. With the challenges teachers face with behaviors in the classroom due to children experiencing trauma, and the increase around our country of school and gun violence, we should all agree that access to mental health treatment must be a priority. This program in Green Hills AEA will be cut with this bill. Students who do not have insurance or caregivers who cannot get them to a clinical setting will go without. Currently, these students can walk down the hallway to receive these critical services. I am asking you to vote NO to HSB542 and yes to our children!

Name: JoAnn Eaton

Comment: As an Iowan teacher for the past 33 years and a parent of a student who utilized AEA speech services, I beg you to slow down and consider the detrimental effects HSB 542 would have on our rural students. There are so many services the AEAs provide that would be eliminated in this bill, including professional development, birth to three, math and literacy professional supports, CTE, mental health, sub and para licensing, gifted and talented, and so much more. In our small rural district it would be very difficult to privately provide these services to students. All children in the state deserve access to these services no matter what their zip code. Please slow down and listen to the teachers and administrators who utilize these services every day and know how important they are to serving our children.

Name: Elizabeth Luttrell

Comment: No to HSB 542 There are many aspects I don't support this bill (except for increasing teacher pay). Two reasons are: Working in special education: In the Condition of the State, Governor Reynolds made it sound like schools could opt out of AEA services and use that money for more teachers almost like the AEA was offering subpar autopilot instruction to students with IEPs. No AEA staff offers instruction (except at a special school like River Hills in Cedar Falls.) The test being used to promote this (NAEP) is a test only 270 students with IEPs took during the last testing. I've worked in many districts and never had students take the NAEP test. It is not given to all students and is a random selection. Not only that, students with disabilities rarely do well on standardized tests so I'd like to see some other measures used to prove our students with IEPs are not making acceptable progress. A good statistic I've seen is that Iowa ranked 3rd lowest in states who have parents who use their Procedural Safeguards Rights to take districts into mediation and/or due process (aka lawsuits) and I think that is the work a lot of AEA employees are doing that is out of the realm of actual instruction that should get some positive attention. My title is Team Representative meaning I go between the school, parents, and direct service providers during IEP meetings. It's a lot of legalities and usually why I explain my job as "paperwork." This is a huge part of what AEA staff do in special education and I think we're doing it pretty well based on that measure. (I will find that source if you'd like to see it.) Because we aren't employed by schools, we can be a "neutral" party that helps calm disputes and goes between the IEP team members. Being a part of the AEA is a unique unbiased relationship with school teams and parents. As a parent: AEAs have grown beyond their initial purpose of serving just special education. I couldn't find any record of this. What I found is that AEAs always helped with media (which is something my kids have benefitted from!) I truly believe what they do aids in a big way to keep a school like CGD (where my sons attend) being able to have similar opportunities to all of the suburbanschools. I do agree they've grown but in good ways. For example, the Lexia LETRS training Governor Reynolds talked about in the Condition of the State I am currently taking through my

AEA and I know CGD is doing through Prairie Lakes. We get to learn collaboratively in a group with our school teams and have coaching available through the AEA. If this part of the AEA goes away (as proposed in the bill), the same training I am taking offered by the state will be all virtual on Saturdays and after school. Personal learning and coaching go away. A lot of statistics have been given about the cost of PD the AEA gives compared to what CGD would have to pay on their own to have similar training (a lot more!). Another extra service is that some districts in our AEA have less than ten ELL students, so the AEA has been providing teachers to meet those students' needs. A lot of the extra things they do have been implemented because they are needed in their districts. This includes Crisis Response Teams (around 50 from Heartland AEA were at Perry after the shooting and in Mason City after they lost several students in a housefire). They are available to schools when there is a tragedy. All of these extras will be gone and while that's being touted as a positive I think it will hurt rural Iowa. I'll be honest, my kids do have a lot fewer opportunities than their cousins in out of state suburbs/friends in Iowa suburbs. I try to think of it as a positive, but knowing CGD will not get the teacher training and media they do now without AEA services is concerning!

Name: Katie Roling

Comment: I am writing in profound opposition to the AEA portion of HSB 542. (Please separate the teacher pay provisions and consider these matters separately.) Area Education Agencies were created to provide equitable services to ALL schools in Iowa public and private, rural and urban in economical and efficient ways. Since their inception, these services have included special education, educational services, and media services, and all three of these areas work in concert to support Iowa's children and educators. All of the services provided by our AEAs (including professional development/curriculum expertise, resources like library/purchasing/printing, and of course special education support) are invaluable to educators and students across the state. If it is true that services have expanded over time, it has been directly in response to gaps and needs expressed by the districts served which continually provide positive feedback about AEA performance. Please also consider that these are services most schools would not be able to afford or access on their own if funding streams were adjusted. The money currently used for educational services (e.g., professional development, consultants) and media services would be returned to the state and NOT given to districts. While the special education flow through funds would be allocated directly to districts, they would not be able to replicate the same level or quality of supports and staff that currently work with their district. Currently, infants, toddlers, and children younger than schoolage are also serviced directly by AEA staff to provide crucial developmental supports and early intervention; what would happen to these services? The AEA portion of HSB 542 would be incredibly damaging to the educational system in Iowa, particularly for smaller and rural schools with already limited funding and resources. I urge you to vote against this bill.

Name: Katie Vander Sanden

Comment: We need our AEAs! Every day I use at least one support from the AEA. Being a very rural district we do not have access to the services the AEA provides. Iowa needs to support ALL students. This can not be done by dismantling the AEA. Thousands of Iowans will be left without jobs. We need to do better as a state. Please fact check everything the Governor said, as many of statements she said were untrue. We need the AEA.

Name: Ashley Panno

Comment: Please oppose HSB 542. A comprehensive review should be just that a review. As a parent of a student who receives special education supports I have seen the benefit that AEA services provide. At the end of the day all students are general education students first. The Gov.'s use of NAECAP test results to justify gutting the AEAs is pure manipulation of data to justify her actual intentions of further dismantling public

education. Less than 1% of Iowa's special education students took that assessment. This bill was not written for the betterment of special education services, it was not written for the benefit of general education students, and it wasn't written for the betterment of public education in Iowa. AEAs have oversight as well as another falsity in the state of the union speech. AEAs are beholden to reviews by the DE (which Heartland passed in 2022 with one recommendation to expand Ed services), and also guidelines put forth in federal law under IDEA. My own child has received the supports needed for him to succeed not in spite of the AEA system, but because of its partnership with our school district.

Name: Chris Englestad

Comment: Continuing Governor Reynolds' assault on low-income Iowa children, this bill raises concerns about the hasty nature of its implementation. The provision of educational and nutritional services to school children is a cause that all Iowans should safeguard. The bill, with its potential to divert funds to private companies, requires a thorough examination and thoughtful consideration. Let's prioritize the best interests of education before moving forward with this legislation.

Name: Berleen Wobeter

Comment: I am writing to oppose this bill. I will make one point. When I started teaching in 1979 I remember ordering films from the AEA. Being a media resource is a longstanding function of AEA. Today those resources have changed and teachers may reserve the use of robotics or science kits. It is logical that teachers share resources and that those resources be in one location for easy reserving and distribution.

Name: Julie Honan

Comment: Please oppose HSB 542. I am an Iowa constituent and parent of an Iowa high school student. My daughter, Avery, has utilized AEA services over the course of her elementary, middle school, and high school career. GHAEA and LEA partners have provided technology, crisis prevention (i.e., HOPE squad), and digital resources, hearing and vision supports/services, and so much more. Facts: *Districts will NOT get "new money" for the services that are being taken away* This bill is detrimental to rural districts. They rely on all that AEA's provide and there is NO way that they can afford to "replace" it. *All 9 AEAs underwent accreditation reviews from the Iowa Department of Education in October 2022. All were reaccredited. *AEA's play a vital role in student mental health (please research Crisis Prevention Team in Perry, IA) If this bill is passed as it is currently written, it will have a devastating impact on our schools, educators, and students. OPPOSE this bill!

Name: Donna Godar

Comment: As a retired teacher and parent of a student with special needs I am concerned about the proposed changes to Iowa's AEAs. As a teacher, the AEA's gave me training when the state or our district required new curriculum or teaching methods. They provided a variety of media and technology for me to expand my own teaching or to use in my classroom. They provide affordable continuing education classes that I used to keep my license current. The services they provide, like speech, OT, PT, Autistic spectrum support, adaptive PE, etc have been vital to me, my students, and their families as we work together to help children achieve their potential. (I did teach in a rural school) As a parent, the services provided gave me guidance to understand the school system, helped my child feel confident and gain skills that she still uses as an adult. There is no dollar value that can add up to that. Please consider this when considering anything that would impact the lives of children and Iowa families.

Name: Judy Stanley

Comment: I strongly urge you to vote NO to Senate Study Bill HSB 542. As you can see from the MANY, MANY comments/posts, there is OVERWHELMING SUPPORT for

AEAs. I am in total agreement in increasing teacher pay, however I do not believe that teacher pay should be included in this bill. Teacher pay should be in a separate bill. AEAs supports and services benefit ALL children in the state, whether they are receiving general education, special education, home school education or private school education, whether they are in large school districts or rural school districts..ALL children benefit from AEA supports and services. The AEAs ensure equitable services to students and educators across the state. All parts of the AEA are needed, dismantling the AEA would be devastating to children, families, teachers, and administrators in Iowa. This bill places undue burden on our schools, in a time when schools need the AEAs assistance to help take they burden off of them. Please hear our voices of opposition to HSB 542 and listen to the value and importance of AEAs to our state.

Name: Kevin Arend

Comment: I STRONGLY URGE YOU TO VOTE NO to HSB 542. As you can see from the MANY, MANY comments/posts from previous public comments, and also I'm sure as you will see today, there is OVERWHELMING SUPPORT for AEAs. I am in agreement in increasing teacher pay, however I do not believe that teacher pay should be included in this bill. Teacher pay should be in a separate bill. AEAs supports and services benefit ALL children in the state, whether they are receiving general education, special education, home school education or private school education, whether they are in large school districts or rural school districts..ALL children benefit from AEA supports and services. The AEAs ensure equitable services to students and educators across the state. All parts of the AEA are needed, dismantling the AEA would be devastating to children, families, teachers, and administrators in Iowa. This bill places undue burden on our schools, in a time when schools need the AEAs assistance to help take they burden off of them. Please hear our voices of opposition to HSB 542 and listen to understand the value and importance of AEAs to our state.

Name: Meg Kofmehl

Comment: Good morning, I am writing in regard to the proposal about the Iowa Area Education Agencies at the state level. I am a resident of Sioux City and I teach in a private school. This is my seventh year of teaching and I have seen the AEA be of great value to all students in our school. The services they provide as well as the opportunities they make possible for all students is so very beneficial to every child in school in Iowa. This proposal is bad for both public and private schools. All my years teaching have been in a private school and I know that we need their resources and assistance as much as, if not more than, the area public schools.I am asking you to vote against the cuts to the AEA. Thank you for your time, Meg Kofmehl

Name: Martha DeGree

Comment: AEAs provide vital services to all education students private and public. School districts do not have the resources or infrastructure to manage all that the AEA does in an efficient and cost effective manner. Students and families will be the big losers if AEA services are cut

Name: Dan Kaspari

Comment: I applaud Governor Reynolds efforts to cut the administrative fat from our education system. I like the proposal to remove the current AEA administrators. The best way to make improvements is to get rid of those most likely to oppose meaningful change. I also like the proposal to reduce the AEA Boards role to advisory only, and return power to the Department of Education. I support the proposal to increase teacher pay, however I believe this should be done in a separate bill. The part of the bill I do not support is the removal of media, technology and other educational services without a proposal for continuing those services through other means.

Name: Mindy Foulk

Comment: Good morning, I am writing in regard to the proposal about the Iowa Area Education Agencies at the state level. I am a resident of Sioux City and I work in a private school. This is my third year working in the schools and I have seen the AEA be of great value to all students in our school. The services they provide as well as the opportunities they make possible for all students is so very beneficial to every child in school in Iowa. This proposal is bad for both public and private schools. As a parent in the state of Iowa and as a member of the education community, I am asking you to vote against the cuts to the AEA. Thank you for your time, Mindy Foulk

Name: Jessica Anderson

Comment: I am writing to express my absolute opposition to HSB 542. I was born and raised in Iowa, attended both private and public schools in Harlan. My husband and I chose to raise our children in Iowa due to the stellar education we were able to receive growing up here and wanted the same for our children. I have experienced different perspectives both as a former student, a mother and a school board member concerning the value that ALL PARTS of our AEAs bring to the table. The special education part of AEA is incredibly important. I also believe the other services, staff, equipment and resources the AEA provides are also incredibly important! Particularly for Iowas rural districts who wouldnt otherwise be able to provide certain learning opportunities for their kids due to financial constraints. The Iowa special education system has the third lowest number of state complaints in the NATION! While it's not exactly clear how the governor is claiming we are failing special education children here, (as mentioned in her State of the State address) the consensus seems to be that she is using a statistic taken from NAEP scores. My understanding is that not every child receiving special ed services takes the NAEP test and, in fact, only 270 Iowa students with IEPs took the NAEP test at the last setting. However, there are over 270,000 students with IEPs in Iowa. That's hardly a representative sample. Any large entity has inefficiencies and those can be addressed via a comprehensive study that involves ALL stakeholders as the governor spoke of in December (but that is contained nowhere in this bill). I guarantee you there isnt a single AEA staff member who wouldnt love to sit down in a room full of smart people who want to look at ways to improve the ways we can improve the ways we serve our children. Give them that chance. This bill will hurt kids. Jessica Anderson Harlan, IA

Name: Lynn Pleggenkuhle

Comment: Please do not limit the wonderful work the AEA provides Iowas children and educators!

Name: Tanya Street

Comment: If the bill passes as is, it will be devastating impacts on our communities. AEAs provide critical research and help with special education and mental health which is something that, especially our rural communities need the most. After seeing what happened in Perry, Iowa, passing this bill would be a slap in the face to those affected in that tragedy. Living in Iowa, I was once proud of how well our schools operated and how our kids performed on a national level. I was proud to have my kids in public schools. Now seeing the devastating blows our children, teachers and schools are undergoing (school choice) and facing (this bill), I am no longer proud of the decisions our government officials are making since they seem to no longer have the best interests in mind for our children, families, teachers and Iowa.

Name: Carrie Fischer

Comment: I am writing in regard to the proposal about the Iowa Area Education Agencies at the state level. I am a resident of Sioux City and I teach in a private school. My children attend a private school. In my 13 years of either teaching/subbing or having children in the system, I have seen the AEA be of great value to all students in our school. The services they provide as well as the opportunities they make possible for all

students is so very beneficial to every child in school in Iowa. This proposal is bad for both public and private schools. I am asking you to vote against the cuts to the AEA.

Name: Sue Slavens

Comment: As a retired school district employee from Pleasant Valley, a parent of three grown children and a grandparent of five, I am very concerned about the proposed changes to AEAs in Iowa. I share your goal of making sure students with disabilities get the services they need, but I oppose the reforms currently proposed in HF 542. Some people don't understand exactly what AEA professionals do to help ALL students achieve. As a retired secretary in an Iowa school guidance office for 25 years, I saw first hand the positive impact AEA personnel had with, not only our special education students and students with disabilities, but the services also provided for general education students and teachers. School staff, teachers and parents alike relied on AEA personnel's expertise to help with the ultimate goal of supporting students' achievement, and, therefore, be successful in school. Teachers receive immense educational support from the AEA including instruction and assessment services in math, language arts and reading, digital and audio books to supplement our school library and improving teaching instruction by providing professional development. I've read that there is some concern that disability student test scores have dropped. I found information from a global study, the Program for International Student Assessment, that student test scores around the world suggest historic setbacks as a result of the COVID pandemic. The US actually fell behind less sharply and climbed in global rankings. The belief that individual school districts across the state of Iowa, especially the many rural districts, can successfully hire or even get access to specialized professionals, including OTs, PTs, SLPs, consultants, audiologists, school psychologists, and social workers is unreasonable. I ask you to take time to understand what all the complex services that AEAs provide. Consider carefully what the consequences of this proposed legislation will do to our students and education system in Iowa. Don't take away AEA jobs, decrease their funding only to make student achievement harder for schools. Now with mental health issues on the rise, we need AEAs more than ever. The AEAs of Iowa have always been a shining beacon for the state and the envy of other states. This proposed bill will only decrease Iowa's excellence. Thank you for listening. Sue Slavens Bettendorf, Iowa

Name: Lois Schreur

Comment: While I live in Omaha, I grew up and received all my education in Iowa and worked for almost fifty years for the AEA in southwest Iowa. Equity and services for all students, whether living in a rural or urban area, was one of the goals when the AEA began services in 1975. I know that AEA services have had a positive effect in the lives of children and families as can be seen by the many letters I received from students with whom we have worked over the last several decades. When we started AEA services, special education teachers drove from school district to school district to provide services until all schools started their own programs. The AEAs have been essential in making sure that special needs students have all the services they need. This includes the speech services my nephews, who were homeschooled, received through the AEA. I am concerned that if this bill is passed, we will lose 50 years of growth and soon be back at the pre 1970 level of services. AEA services have been essential for other than special education students as well. The media services helped schools when to have such resources would be cost prohibitive for a small school district; mental health support and support when schools faced death and other trauma has been available for all students; services have been available for our English language students as well. I am very concerned that Iowa is losing much in terms of public education with lack of sufficient funding in the last several years, loss of money now with vouchers that serve only the few at the expense of the many through public education, and now with the potential loss of the AEA services across Iowa as well. If we truly valued all students and those who work with students, then

we would absolutely not be undermining services as proposed by this bill.

Name: Pamela Schroder

Comment: I am a resident of Scott County. I am a parent of two children that went through our public school system, as did I, and a grandparent of two children currently attending public schools. I am also retired from the Mississippi Bend AEA. I am writing to express my deepest concern and opposition to the proposed legislation that could significantly impact the AEAs and ultimately the students it serves. There are federal laws and regulations governing special education implementation. The collaborative efforts between AEAs and schools are vital, especially for rural/small districts to ensure compliance with these regulations. Attempting to do this without the help of the AEA could compromise the quality of education for students with special needs as well as those without. The Department of Education, situated in Des Moines, will not be able to replace AEA functions/services with the proposed addition of 139 employees. When my district needs help how quickly will they get a response, let alone a meeting to collaborate on a solution. Our AEA, MBAEA, is a matter of a few miles away and things happen quickly. I just do not understand how making a new department at the DE with only 139 staff is going to be effective. Please support AEAs and push back these policy changes. This whole thing is happening way too fast and it's the children of our state that will suffer, especially your special needs children and their families. AEAs go through an accreditation every 5 years. If there were problems should they have not been addressed in an accreditation report? My hope is that this bill doesn't slide through. AEAs serve a very diverse community Special Ed, General Ed, huge school districts, small school districts, rural school districts, accredited parochial/private schools. Who will provide all the service needed?

Name: Gina Whitty

Comment: AEAs provide critical resources and expertise, especially for special education, and I am in full support of keeping all programs fully funded and resourced.

Name: Carolyn Stephenson

Comment: I oppose the proposed cuts to Iowas Area Education Agencies. As a former Iowa educator, I needed the technology services and professional development provided by my local AEA. Teachers benefit from the curriculum support and expertise of the AEA specialists. As a grandparent, I question cutting students emotional and social development support. Regardless of causation, children have very obvious challenges in these areas. It makes no sense to me to cut these services when they are so critical to childrens mental health. It also makes no sense to cut early childhood special education support. All the evidence shows that early intervention with children and their families improve future outcomes. I oppose HF 542. Such drastic changes to an integral part of public education in Iowa removes an important pillar of support for public education. And, public tax dollars should only fund public schools; not private education contractors or private schools.

Name: Joseph Esser

Comment: The AEA provided my oldest son with speech services when he was 23 yrs of age. Both of my boys used their counseling services through grade school and high school. As a high school teacher, I have seen firsthand the positive effects of counseling services provided by the AEA staff in our building. Many students suffering from suicidal ideation, depression, and anxiety have benefitted from the counseling provided by our in building AEA staff. From a professional development standpoint, I have benefitted from all the training provided by the AEA. I have been trained in suicide prevention, mandatory reporting, child and dependent adult abuse, bloodborne pathogens, and many others. Having AEA staff in our building providing more than just SPED support is vital to maintaining a healthy, positive, and productive student culture that is conducive to learning. Losing these services would

be detrimental to all schools, especially smaller districts. Sharing personnel would be much less effective and a waste of our tax dollars.

Name: Joann Apling

Comment: Hello, I have been an employee of the Janesville Consolidated School District for 25 years (currently as the elementary school secretary). I oppose HF542. I feel that changes made to our AEAs will negatively impact our teachers ability to provide support and resources for our students. If you take away their tools how can builders build? Districts are on very tight budgets . Our teachers and staff have utilized everything the AEA has to offer from book sets (for student projects), printing,laptop repair, and continuing education resources for our teachers, to equipment for students who have special needs. The AEA has been an invaluable source of support and the tools needed to aid our teachers in providing the highest quality education possible. Thanks to technology provided by the AEA in 2012 one of our students who was homebound was able to attend classes, graduate, and walk the hallways in real time. It made a huge impact on his quality of life. To make any reduction to the services provided by the AEAs would do a great disservice to our students. Please, please, do not pass HF542

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