

GOLDWATER

I N S T I T U T E

March 28, 2023

Representative Skyler Wheeler

Chairman, House Education Committee

Chairman Wheeler and Members of the House Education Subcommittee on SF496:

SF496 offers a historic opportunity to strengthen parental rights in Iowa, but the legislation's intent to provide greater transparency in schools could be furthered by adding two key provisions:

- 1) Restore the transparency provision that ensures public schools disclose online a listing of the materials used for student instruction.
- 2) Fix the definition of "instructional materials" in the transparency section (Section 14: 279.77), which currently allows schools to hide materials even from parents who specifically ask to review them.

As originally proposed by Gov. Reynolds (under SSB1145 and HSB222), SF496 would have ensured full transparency in Iowa public schools by requiring districts to disclose online a listing of the actual materials used in the classroom. Unfortunately, this provision was omitted when a strike-everything re-write was adopted to amend the bill in the Senate.

This subcommittee already once approved the Governor's robust online curriculum transparency provisions in HSB222, and the full Iowa House approved similar online transparency provisions last session via HF2577.

While a state fiscal note suggested this approach would require extra time from teachers, school [administrators](#) and [teachers](#) across the [country](#) have already testified that content can be listed online using simple free resources like Google Docs and actually *save* teachers time compared to the [hours](#) they typically spend *weekly* scouring the internet for resources to use in the classroom—by helping them see what their most effective peers are already using and listing online.

Including the following language in the legislation would require minimal additional effort on behalf of any school staff beyond what is already performed when preparing weekly instruction:

"A list of all instructional materials used to teach students in each class in the school district, organized by subject area, grade level, and teacher. Materials should be listed prior to or within ten school days of first use and may be listed in any publicly available format selected by the district, including via collaborative online document or spreadsheet software or an online learning management system."

Sincerely,

Matt Beienburg

Director of Education Policy

Goldwater Institute