

Comment Report

Education

Date: 01/16/2024

Time: 02:30 PM

Location: RM 102, Sup. Ct. Consult

Name: Kirsten Siebenga

Comment: To whom it may concern, I would like to express my opposition and concern with House Study Bill 542. As a graduate of the Cedar Rapids Community School District, Area Education Agencies (AEA) had a huge impact on my education and development. Programs like College for Kids, a summer day camp that hosts a variety of classes in foreign language, history, engineering and art classes, exposed me to hands-on activities that enriched my learning and introduced me to a wealth of new classes like dissection as a young student. Other programs supported by AEAs, like Open Mind Open Doors, exposed young girls, like me, to careers in math, science and engineering by putting on workshops to learn more about these future careers. I can confidently say without these programs I would not have a career in public health. I strongly oppose proposed House Bill 542 and would encourage this committee to further research the breadth and impact of Iowa AEAs on Iowa student and teachers learning and development.

Name: Alison Frerichs

Comment: I participate in computer science classes as well as Battle of the Books at my school. Without the services that the AEA is currently providing, these kinds of classes and activities would no longer be in my life. I am extremely grateful to all of the teachers and AEA members that have made this possible. They have had such a positive impact on my life and have given me great opportunities. I would not be able to imagine what I would do without the computer science classes in my day because they teach me a lot about things that are going to be showing up in our world more and more. As for Battle of the Books, it is a great opportunity to be with a great group of people and I would not trade it for the world. So please take the voices of our generation seriously and listen to what we have to say. Even though we are young, we are a smart, talented, determined group, and know what we need to learn and keep the helpfulness our school systems have offered us.

Name: Deb Siebenga

Comment: The AEAs are the unrecognized heroes of Iowa's educational system. They are behind the scenes at every turn supporting all aspects of education at all levels. They provide resources and training for teachers in every subject field, including science and Foss kits for hands-on activities. My personal experience has been with Collage for Kids which is an amazing program inspiring thousands of students over the past years, including my daughter, to set high goals in the science areas and others. She did dissecting classes, mock trial, writing classes, art classes etc. These courses helped her achieve her academic goals and obtain her mph in health policy at UNC, . Cutting services from the AEA will not only affect our special needs students, but our highly talented and gifted students as well. Other

Name: Andrea Dibble

Comment: As a parent, I have used AEA services for my general education students! Both of my children attended College for Kids where they got a chance to grow in many ways that school couldn't offer them. As an elementary teacher, I RELY on our AEA for science kits providing hands-on experiences for my students. I RELY on our AEA for materials from their Media Services division. I RELY on their literacy and math

consultants to help me implement best practices. Please please please do. NOT pass this bill.

Name: Abby Leland

Comment: I would like to express my opposition to House Study Bill 542. I am a parent of two students in the Cedar Rapids Community School District. My children have benefitted from services provided by our local Education Agency, Grant Wood AEA. GWAEA has had a huge impact on my sons and daughters education and development. Both my children were very fortunate to participate in GWAEAs College for Kids enrichment summer programming. The opportunity to extend their learning in meaningful, engaging, and academically challenging ways was rewarding. I strongly oppose proposed House Bill 542 and would encourage this committee to further research the breadth and impact of Iowa AEAs on Iowa student and teachers learning and development. Please do not limit or hinder our students opportunities for enrichment and remediation. Our students continue to need assistance in meeting learning benchmarks, especially after the pandemic. Services to students, and the educational professionals who serve them, and should not be cut. We need to be investing in our students, not taking away opportunities for growth and development. Please do right by our children. Respectfully, Abby Leland

Name: Lisa Hartman

Comment: Please vote No on this bill. I've been a public school principal, assistant principal, Director of Ed Services at Prairie Lakes AEA, and now a curriculum director at Lewis Central. I have a master's of arts in teaching, a master's of science in education, and a doctorate in educational leadership. AEAs are absolutely critical to the success of schools in Iowa. I want to share some stories with you on the AEA's impact from my various positions in public schools. But first, I have some concerns about what is happening with this PROPOSED bill. First, the DE is already disseminating information (that from my perspective isn't even accurate) like the bill has passed. Second, the Dept is posting positions to be able to provide the manpower for this legislation, again, like the bill has passed. As a registered Democrat, moves like this further alienate me from the Republican party. It makes me feel like constituents voices don't matter. Last year, I advocated more than I ever have before. This was because of school vouchers. I was left feeling like my voice didn't matter, as the voucher bill seemed to be ramrodded through without listening to the voices of constituents. Republicans, it seems as if you have your marching orders from the Governor and if you don't vote the way she wants, she'll find someone who will and campaign against you. Again, it leaves some of us feeling hopeless. It also makes me feel like we don't live in a democracy but a dictatorship. We should ALL be concerned about the lack of a democratic process we've experienced in recent years. If you're still reading, here are my experiences with AEAs, which I think are a bit unique and worth hearing about: Farragut, Iowa. My first principalship was in Farragut, Iowa. I was a new principal and they were a district on the verge of being closed by the Dept of Ed. I wore the hat of many different roles: Principal, assistant principal, special education director, special populations (EL, TAG, etc.) coordinator, parttime counselor, curriculum director, professional learning director...and the list goes on. I remember coming to work my first day and sitting at my desk and thinking, "Now what? What does a principal really do?" Fortunately, my office became a revolving door of AEA personnel. This ranged from literacy consultants, a CTE (career/technical education) coordinator, tech support, special education administrators, English Language coordinator, and more. As the next two years went on, these individuals literally sat next to me in supporting me with planning, facilitating, and ensuring compliance. I would not have been able to do the work it takes to lead a school district had it not been for the AEA. Nevada, Iowa. At Nevada, the biggest AEA support we tapped into was special education support. We had special education representatives who were experts in support with IEPs and providing support with challenging behavior. There were many instances when we had students who had challenging behavior and all the things we had tried internally

weren't working. AEA staff would come in and observe. They would tap into their specialized training and experience and provide us with ideas that worked. This was a win for us as staff, a win for students, and a win for parents. I recognize that the current proposal doesn't eliminate special education services, but let's be real, it does. Given the option to retain their special education flow through dollars, districts are going to keep them. Also, the DE seems to be in dire straits itself. Just look at the rate in which people are leaving the organization. I do not have confidence that the Dept of Ed could provide the same level of individualized special education support. Director of Ed Services, Prairie Lakes AEA. As a Director of Ed Services, I oversaw tech, print & media and all general education support services. Our staff never ran out of work to do. One of the most challenging aspects we had was how to provide equitable services because our staff was wanted and needed in so many different school districts. There are people working in our AEAs with specialized knowledge who support districts in improving their outcomes. Council Bluffs, Iowa I am now the Director of Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment at Lewis Central. Here are just some of the ways we've tapped into AEA support. We've used AEA staff to help us plan and facilitate learning with our district leadership team, school improvement staff have supported us with building knowledge on multitiered systems of support. Math and literacy consultants are in our districts regularly to provide training, consult, and coach. Our special education AEA staff are also in our buildings every single day providing support in a myriad of ways that is too numerous to even begin to list. Should AEAs be whittled down to only special education support, our system will be taxed immensely. Should AEA oversight go to the Dept of Ed and districts have a choice in regards to their flow through money, I am convinced that it will be the death of AEAs. The IA Dept of Ed is an organization built for compliance. While they have expanded their reach over the last several years, they are not an organization that can provide the personalized support that AEAs were providing. They are also an organization that works for our Governor, as opposed to LOCAL boards. This gives me concern about the choices they will make and having the best interest of those they serve in mind. Please vote No on this bill. This bill will be added to the list of legislation that is negatively impacting public education should it pass. I implore you to at least ask questions, study things, and look at this from multiple perspectives.

Name: Valerie Cull

Comment: To whom it may concern, I would like to express my concern with House Study Bill 542. As a parent of a student of Alburnett CSD, Area Education Agencies (AEA) had a huge impact on my son's education and development. He is a very advanced child in a smaller, rural school district. The College for Kids program allowed him to find 'his people'.....kids that did well in school that were more introverted. I also have concerns that even if you give the money back to the school districts to use, that things like IT services (especially with all the hacks going on), and other administrative and educational services will not be affordable for our school. I am all about lower taxes and I applaud the governor for reducing the footprint of government, but not to the expense of smaller school districts throughout the state. I strongly encourage this committee to further research the breadth and impact of Iowa AEAs on Iowa student and teachers learning and development, especially on smaller schools throughout the state. Thank you, Valerie Cull

Name: Amy Jackson

Comment: I am deeply impacted by the outcome of House Study Bill 452. I have utilized with 2 of my children AEA services through GWAEA. Their referrals, evaluation, training and partnership with district helped my children to not only make it through but do extremely well in school. I was so moved I left my long time job to be a part of the AEA system to impact many children, families and districts. Please review the state and other accreditation reports. Review and collaborate don't pick a part a system that is great, work for all Iowa students to I make it even better. Sincerely, Amy Jackson

Name: Drew Bowers

Comment:

I am writing to urge you to oppose House Study Bill 542. As a Black Hawk County constituent and parent to a child who depends on the incredible support of our AEA the potential dismantling of this vital system deeply concerns me. The AEA system has supported my child through some of the most challenging times of her and our lives. When Layla was born 14 weeks premature, we knew shed have a long road ahead in her development. After several months in the NICU, we werent sure where to turn to support all of her unique needs. Through our transition home, were quickly connected with Central Rivers AEAs support. Without the wonderful folks of early access, physical therapy, occupational therapy, and audiology support, she wouldnt be the thriving little girl she is today. To receive those same services through private providers wouldve been costly. Not to mention, they give her the tools to succeed in a schoolbased environment, something the medical model isnt built for or equipped to handle. Her teachers receive ongoing training from specialists in early childhood, literacy, and math that keep them current with educational research. Furthermore, Layla has access to critical technology and media that I fully doubt her school would be able to provide. Not only does it support my daughter and her needs, but Im certain it benefits her teachers and classmates in ways that ensure all kids benefit and succeed. I am concerned that if AEAs are gutted as HSB 524 calls for, Layla, and countless others like her will not have the bright futures that are currently accessible through the support that AEA is built to provide. The way this bill reads, these supports will no longer be centralized in the Cedar Valley, but will be based out of Des Moines. I cant imagine that will keep our local experts local. The educational experts who serve to support her teachers will be eliminated. The media and technology support she requires to thrive will be cut, and left up to her school to pay for out of their general fund. I hope that you will join me in opposing this harmful legislation.

Name:

Jessica Dager

Comment:

In the 1980's in Sibley, Iowa, I could not say any words with the letter S in them. I was evaluated and provided services by "Area 4" the AEA for NW Iowa at the time. I did not have an IEP. I just needed these services and with this bill, that sort of thing would not exist. As a 20+ year special education teacher, I can tell you that my students are General Education students first. They go to English and Math and Science and Social Studies and the nonsped services that will be cut by this bill WILL impact all students, including the special education ones. So saying that no sped services are being cut is a lie. Additionally, districts will spend way more money duplicating the services that AEA provides and rural districts just won't provide them. Go ahead and study/look at the AEAs to do a review but a blanket cut to all nonsped services will hurt Iowans and our students. Maybe that is the goal of this bill, but it will achieve that goal. It is sad how far Iowa education has fallen in the past 40 years.

Name:

Tabatha Durfey

Comment:

Please vote no to this bill. The AEA has played a pivotal role in our school district in many ways, my family was personally affected when his teacher, school administrator, and AEA worked together to create a reading recovery plan for him and through their tireless efforts he was able to not only get to grade level proficiency, but exceeding in six months. We are forever grateful for the early and very effective intervention that now has allowed our son to become a consistent honor roll student in middle school. Had the AEA not been there with the school 7 years ago I am positive my son would not be performing near as well today. Please do your part as our elected leaders to ensure fully informed decisions are made, if changes are set to be executed we have game plans ready that are viable and will truly ensure the safety, well being, and pursuit of excellence for our Iowa students can be guaranteed.

Name:

Diana Volkens

Comment:

Dear Governor Reynolds, Id like to share concerns I have about HSB542 and want to make sure you are aware of the impact of this bill on the kids of our community, as

well as kids all across the state of Iowa. I am the grandmother of four children, all of whom go to public schools. I want to make sure they have the best opportunities possible. The severe cuts that you want to make to the AEA, would greatly impact our students and our teachers. As you know teachers have been leaving the profession in great numbers for years now. They are overworked and take money out of their own pockets for supplies. (I think this is especially true in public schools). Now you want to throw more work at them? That will just push that many more teachers to look for a different profession. More money is not the solution for great stress. The AEA takes a lot of the work off of these teachers. AEA helps a great number of students, not just special ed. School districts in our entire state are struggling financially. Now they are going to have to pay a lot more for the services they are getting through AEA now. Our district has already had to close the school in Gladbrook. Our district shares teachers and sports with other schools. We are doing everything we can to keep our school. I have read the department of education's great praise for the AEA across our state. They also had an outstanding accreditation visit. If there are some small problems with the AEA, fix them. I don't feel it's smart to put over 1,000 Iowans out of work. Iowans that are dedicated to the kids of our state! Most of them have dedicated their entire adult lives to helping students to have the best school experience and best future possible!! I also feel as if this Bill is being rushed. This is such an important bill in our state's future. Please, please, please take your time, do some studies, talk to people at the AEA, TALK TO TEACHERS, TALK TO PARENTS! Thank you for your time and consideration, Diana Volkens
Concerned Citizen of Iowa

Name: Heather Hagebock

Comment: I'm here to address my concerns over HSB 542. While the increase in teachers pay is something sorely needed in Iowa, the detriment felt by stripping the AEA is a terrible idea and will be felt statewide. I am opposed to the action towards AEA presented in this bill. Please review and put some thought into this bill. Meet with AEA members to work out a logical solution. This should not be handled under the table as it has been thus far. Thank you.

Name: Angi Hiesterman

Comment: I ask that you please vote no for this bill. Iowa AEA provides necessary services to our rural communities. They are vital to the success of all students and make impactful results every single day. Iowa needs to start putting all citizens first and think about our future!

Name: Adrian Hagebock

Comment: I am in support for better teacher wages. I am not in support of the actions to the AEA. They do too much in the state of Iowa for our teaching staff and students and this would have an enormous negative effect on both.

Name: Matt Ohman

Comment: I am the Director of a nonprofit organization in Sioux City we are the Early Childhood Board for Ida and Woodbury Counties, and the Decatur Board for Woodbury. We also manage the Beyond the Bell afterschool program, among other programs. Northwest AEA has been a vital partner in our efforts for over 25 years. My observation is that they are much-needed advocates and support for students and families, as well as teachers. They are the unsung heroes of the educational system. Why would we want to gut those services?

Name: Ella Hagebock

Comment: Iowa NEEDS all parts of the AEA. Without the AEA, the state will see how it will negatively affect not just students, but teachers and schools too. The AEA helps with so much and removing parts of it might be the dumbest decision anyone can make. Do better for the citizens of Iowa. LISTEN to the needs and wants of the

citizens of Iowa.

Name: Mackenzie Jenness

Comment: To whom it may concern, I am writing to you in opposition to the House Study Bill 542. As a parent of a child with a speech delay, the AEA has been imperative in his development and getting him back to a developmentally appropriate level. They have guided and helped us in such a kind, effective, and professional manner. I also live in a very rural community. To get the type of knowledge and professionalism that the AEA has provided in many facets of our school system, would simply not be attainable unless the state is going to significantly increase the school districts budget. At the very least I feel this bill needs to be slowed down and discussed at length by all of the stakeholders in this decision. The fact that the Department of Education is already advertising for positions is extremely premature and inappropriate.

Name: Hilary Foster

Comment: Please, please, please do not dismantle the AEAs. As a mother of premature twins, born at 32 weeks, the AEA stepped in and helped us navigate our NICU stay, as well as all the additional testing involved. They were also a support when my husband thought our little Owen was speech delayed, and provided additional testing and evaluation. Even now the AEA is scheduled to come into their PreK classroom next week for hearing screenings. These little things all help teachers and families to catch things that might not otherwise be, and to help find resources earlier, rather than later. AEA helps the TAG programs, that our district has finally been able to try to get up and rolling again these past few years. AEA is crisis intervention, should anything like Perry, God forbid, ever happen in our state again. AEA staff has had their boots on the ground there since it happened. The staff helps with other mental health services and training as well. When many other mental health services have already been cut for students, it makes the services that the AEA provides that much more important. AEA helps to print materials or provide resources that can be loaned or borrowed, saving each school district across the state a lot of money each year. AEA provides districts with specialists, that the district will otherwise unlikely be able to afford for reading, math, etc. I know I'm just touching on a few of the many things AEA staff work on and work with. It's more than just special education. It has to be. And while raising teacher salaries sounds fantastic, turning around and cutting those same teachers' supports is a slap in the face. Please provide teachers the support they need, especially in rural districts like Newton. To say these agencies lack oversight is a far stretch. Up until recently their audit report were available on the Department of Education's website. Feel free to tweak them. Try to make them better. Hold individuals accountable that are not be pulling their weight. But don't take away these district supports that do so much for our educational system in Iowa. Do not dismantle the AEAs. Our children deserve the best education that we can provide.

Name: Kelly Ashworth

Comment: To whom it may concern: I am opposed to HSB 542. I would note that I am in support of increased teacher compensation. Dismantling the AEA system will negatively impact my work as a Special Education Consultant as I do Child Find. I use my Educational and Assistive Technology Consultants frequently. My teachers also use the Media and Technology resources. Assistive tech is used frequently for the students with IEPs. The Educational Consultants help me by improving intervention and core instruction to reduce the number of students I potentially must evaluate. I ask that you take more time to truly understand the impacts of this bill on the students of Iowa.

Name: Sarah DuBois

Comment: As a mother of two children in the Ames Community School District, I ask that you please vote no for this bill. Iowa AEA provides necessary services to our

communities. They are vital to the success of all students and make a difference in the lives of students everyday.

Name: Brad Nau

Comment: As a pediatrician, I have observed the great positive impact the AEA has had on my patients. Pupils with learning difficulties, behavioral problems, and mental health issues have received critical support. For many, this is the only professional intervention for these challenges. The loss of the services providing by the AEA would be devastating for many of these children and their families. The negative consequences would be immediate as well as long term for the studinflation, teacher salaries have been declining. Across the state attracting and retaining quality educators have become a serious concern. If we want a well educated populace, we need quality teachers.

Name: Amy Endle

Comment: While any opportunity to increase teacher salaries is beneficial, HSB 542 does this while crippling small school districts. These two initiatives need to be separated. Eliminating the educational and media services departments within the AEA would hurt small school school districts across rural Iowa. These districts heavily rely on AEAs for teacher trainings, support in researching the best curricula, providing media resources to students, and making specialized expertise available to ALL districts not just the large districts with greater resources. I strongly oppose any bill which guts the services of the AEA and devalues the hundreds of highly skilled AEA professionals.

Name: Vicki Hiesterman

Comment: To whom it may concern. I am opposed to House Study Bill 542 regarding AEAs. As a retired para with the Fort Dodge Community School District I worked with numerous students who needed the resources provided to the teachers through the AEA. This bill also now affects my daughter who has what she describes her dream job working with preschool children & their families to help identify their future educational needs. She as well all the others have studied an obtained the endorsements required for their positions. Pleas dont gut these positions.

Name: Brandi Hymen

Comment: Please do not pass bill HSB542. At the very least consider alternative restructuring that wont leave children without their much needed services. My twins were born 2 months prematurely and had developmental delays. At 18 months, one of them was diagnosed with autism. Our pediatrician put in referrals to Heartland AEA, speech, and occupational therapists. The speech and occupational therapists had 12 year long waitlists. Early intervention is key in regards to autism and the AEA reached out within a few days and came out to my home within a week. Early Access was a huge part of my childrens developmental growth. Even though we were unable to get into therapy services, three women came to our house and we had weekly visits, including an SLP. They provided me tools and resources critical to development. They brought me and recommended books and toys that helped the kids learn and grow. When preschool time came, they walked me through the entire process and made sure the kids were all set up for early preschool. One of the workers came once a week through both years of preschool and we continued working with a speech language pathologist through AEA and the school. My daughter pushed through her goals and speech issues and was eventually where she needed to be. My son, who wouldnt look anyone in the eye or interact learned how to be social. When we moved into Kindergarten and grades above the AEA continued to attend IEP meetings and together with the special ed team worked out plans for success. These are thorough plans that are tailor made for a child to meet goals. My daughter still has struggles in some areas, but because of the help and resources she gets, she is making progress and steadily meeting goals. My son has access to a para educator, an intensive IEP,

the SLP that we worked with in our home, and technology assistance and resources that wouldn't otherwise be available. We love the AEA and it is a vital component to our children's growth and development

Name: April Ament

Comment: Dear Legislator, I am April Ament. I live in Colfax, IA in Jasper County. I have been a teacher in ColfaxMingo School District for the past 20 years. I am writing to you today to ask you to oppose HSB 542. Since the inception of AEAs in the 1970s, they have existed to provide fair, equal, cost-effective services across the state in the areas of special education, education services (such as literacy and math instruction), and media/technology. They provide resources that are too cost-prohibitive for schools to secure independently. The AEAs' resources support all Iowa students, not just those in special education. AEAs follow the standards of service established in Iowa Administrative Code 281 and provide these services to all public schools and accredited private schools within Iowa. AEAs have supported my school by providing media services in way of collection of books for classroom use, printing and lamination services, van delivery service picking up and dropping off materials, professional development in all academic areas including social and emotional health by trained and knowledgeable consultants in each of these areas at no or very minimal cost to our district. In addition, we work with all the AEA consultants from early childhood, regular, and special education as a team to offer and deliver a research-based and age-appropriate curriculum. I am concerned that if AEAs are dismantled as HSB 542 calls for our district will have to figure out how we will get these services, at a higher expense, or not have these services for our teachers and students at all. And that all means more work for teachers and administrators and will hurt our students' education in the long run. I hope you will join me in opposing this legislation in its current form. The governor promised a study and evaluation of the AEA system, but HSB 542 removes the possibility for any improvement because it eliminates large segments of the system entirely. This bill needs full public transparency and engagement from parents, teachers, administrators, and others that will be directly impacted. I believe there's a better way to improve outcomes for Iowa's students. Please consider taking the year to put together a team to really evaluate the AEA and research alternatives instead of dismantling it all? Thank you for taking your time and reading this email. Sincerely, April Ament

Name: Lindsey Carlson

Comment: I would like to express my strong opposition to the portion of HSB 542 that eliminates AEA services. As a teacher, parent of elementary aged kids, and a tax payer, this bill guts so many services that your constituents rely on. For school districts to replicate the services provided by AEAs would be costly if even possible. I support raising teacher pay, but to do so in the same bill that you decimate services that are critical to our ability to do our jobs is abhorrent. This part of the bill should be pulled out and considered on its own.

Name: Katie Mitchell

Comment: Please vote no on HSB 542. As a teacher in the Norwalk community school district and a citizen and parent in the Ankeny school district this decision will have a major impact on my life, my family, my students, and their families. The AEA is a crucial, unbiased organization rooted in research and best practice that provides our schools with support for our students in all realms of learning. There was a time when Iowa schools were admired for our high quality and cutting edge education. The unseen heroes that helped create that high quality were the area education agencies. Our public schools have taken hit after hit the past few years with lack of funding, lack of support for teachers and staff, and lack of support for students of all diversities. All of those things were underhanded attempts at gutting public education. But with this threat to area education agencies, the threat is no longer underhanded. The attack on

AEAs is a clear and blatant attempt to destroy public education. Our children deserve better. Please do right by our children and our schools. Don't touch our area education agencies.

Name: Gina Durfee

Comment: Please reconsider this bill. As a public school teacher in Council Bluffs, I find the AEA services to be helpful to me as a teacher and impactful to students. I have used the following services, allowing me to be a better instructor for the students:Media: from checking out handson kits, previewing curriculum, checking out class sets of novels. I also called and got recommendations from knowledgeable staff based on what I needed. I got materials the same week!Challenging Behavior Consultants I was trained in advanced behavior techniques by the AEA, allowing me to advance my skills and help students with increasingly challenging behavior; I also called in the AEA Challenging Behavior Consultant to work with an extreme situation. The students got what they needed!OT Consulthaving someone I could collaborate with helped a student stay IN GENERAL EDUCATION, had the OT not helped with he sensory issues this student would have been in a selfcontained classroomThere's so much more. How can school districts fill this gap in the timeline set out by the governor and this committee? The answer is, they cannot! Please take your time and do this right. Teachers are already struggling, we don't need the added headache of not having the supports and materials we need!

Name: Rachel Krofta

Comment: As a school counselor in Iowa, I am very concerned about the proposed cuts to area education agencies. The AEA provides valuable academic, behavioral, and socialemotional supports to students and staff in my school. They offer quality, meaningful professional development to all school staff. Right now the AEA is mobilizing school counselors to support Perry students and staff to return to school. What a time to propose cuts.

Name: Kylie Ladely

Comment: I am writing to express my opposition of this bill. Rural communities rely on the AEAs services. The governor has already taken away PUBLIC funding from PUBLIC schools which directly impacts rural communities. Our kids deserve better.

Name: Bailey Ortman

Comment: I am the 2nd grade teacher at North Kossuth Elementary in Swea City. I am currently in my 3rd year of teaching, and I cant say how many more years I will be able to do this job because of all of the changes that are currently being presented.We are a small school with less than 150 kids in our elementary. Because of this, I am the only teacher at my grade level. Because of this, it is very hard for me to get all of the supports that I need for my class.I currently have 4 students on IEPs for different skills in my class of 20 students, and I have 2 more that I have on my radar for needing to also be on IEPs. Of my 4 students on IEPs, only 1 of them is in Special Education because of one skill deficit. This means that I actually have 11 IEPs that I need to follow (3 behavior, 3 reading, 2 math, and 3 speech).Every day as an educator is difficult because we have so many students functioning and learning at different levels. IEPs get added into the mix, and it makes it even more difficult because those students need extra support constantly for each of the skills that they are in SPED for.The AEA has been able to step up and help me with many supports that I have needed. I use the word many instead of all because I already feel as though the AEA is stretched so thin. We have to share many of our representatives with other schools. This means we dont always have the direct access to them that we need, and this is hurting our students because we cannot provide them with everything that they need. I understand that we will never truly be able to provide everything needed, but taking away these AEA services is going to make the issues even worse. I am going to discuss some of my favorite AEA services below. I dont

have the time to go over every essential service they provide as I am also a mother of two young children that require a lot of my attention, but it should be noted that all of the AEAs services are extremely beneficial to not only educators and students but also families. In all 3 years of my teaching experience, I have had to use the AEA behavior representative for help with at least 1 student each year. Without her support, I don't think I would have been able to successfully intervene with each student's drastically different behavior needs as our state's college education programs do not teach us enough on how to deal with the real behaviors that we face in the classroom. I have also used the AEA's speech service every year. I am trained in how to help a child learn to read, but I can't help them truly understand the letter sound to word connection if they cannot make the sounds correctly. Incorrect pronunciation of sounds in kindergarten and 1st grade make it hard for me to help the kids with the main reading goal of second grade fluency. And that is only the first three years of school. The further on a student gets without the proper support, the harder it is to decrease the gap in their learning. Another service I have had to be connected with each year is occupational therapy. Like I mentioned before, it's a shame that each AEA covers such a large area because my kids only get OT once every other week. However, it's still an amazing service to have as I am not trained in how to help students with those specific needs. If a child is struggling to hold a pencil properly, how can we expect them to write neatly enough for the teacher to read? This causes so many problems in my classroom because my paraprofessional or I will end up having to write the student's answers because I cannot truly assess their knowledge if I cannot read their work. In turn, this ends up hurting their writing skills even more, but I simply don't have the time to wait for these students to try to figure out how to write as I have so many things that I am required to teach during the day. OT has also helped with student issues such as not being able to control scissors and not being able to properly operate silverware. Each year teachers are required to complete mandatory trainings. The AEA provides many of these trainings at no cost to the educators. What will happen if the AEA is taken away? Will the state choose to pay for these since they are a requirement? I cannot afford to pay for them (or really even my continuing education) because of the cost of raising children on such a low salary. Another huge asset is the free access to many digital and physical resources. Our school does not have the budget to be able to give us all of the resources we would like to use to better our students' education. The AEA provides so many of these for us at no cost. On the topic of money, I do appreciate the minimum pay for teachers being increased because we truly are the backbone of the nation. Without teachers, you would not have the job that you currently hold. However, if this money is coming from defunding the AEA, it is not acceptable.

Name: Lindsay Rains

Comment: I strongly support increased teacher pay as proposed in HBSB 542. However, I am deeply concerned about potential legislative actions towards the AEA. The AEA plays an integral role in supporting both public and private schools. Eliminating certain aspects of the AEA could diminish crucial support for teachers and schools, ultimately jeopardizing teacher retention and negatively impacting student success. It is crucial to consider the broader implications before making changes that could undermine the wellbeing of our education system. Thank you for your attention to these critical matters.

Name: Sarah Blackford

Comment: I oppose HSB 542 as someone who has benefited from many services being offered by the AEAs. I struggle to understand why there has been such a rush put on this bill. It fills me with distrust as a decision that weighs so heavily should not be made with such haste; it makes me feel like Governor Reynolds has a personal agenda that she doesn't want realized. I am raising kids in this state and her willingness to undermine the resources that support their education is alarming. To what end? I also call for more transparency as to the rerouting of funds. This bill is a mistake and does not benefit the whole of Iowa's education system.

Name: Lindsey Hoodjer

Comment: I am writing to express concerns related to HSB 542. I live in a rural community and believe the impact on our schools, students, families, and community would be catastrophic. There are many families in our community that are positively impacted by AEA services in school and in their home with Early Access support. While I do support the increase in teacher pay, I do not support the changes proposed to the AEA.

Name: Jen Kinder

Comment: To whom it may concern, I would like to state my opposition to House Bill 542. Looking into the bill so many questions have been raised, yet no answers available. What happens to students receiving non special education services? Who will fulfill and can it be fulfilled in rural areas? How are district to make a decision not knowing even if they can replicate or even afford to replicate services from the AEA? If this bill is in the beginning stages and not yet hit the floor hoe does the Dept of Ed have jobs out for it? Special education funding is very specific and tie to raises is impossible and in the end will be more costly to districts and hurt students.I implore you if you can not answers these questions then stop and do not push this bill to the floor. Every entity needs a reevaluation to see where they can improve, but not a gutting.

Name: Jennifer Reese

Comment: I am very much in favor of higher teacher pay that is proposed in this bill. It could help with the teacher shortages. I am very much not in favor of the proposed changes to the AEA system. As an educator, an AEA employee, a parent, and a grandparent, I am very concerned about House Study Bill 542 and the impact that it could have on schools, teachers, students, and my family.Schools, especially small, rural schools would struggle to find the staff and time to analyze data and know what to do for certain state and federal documentation without the support of school improvement consultants. They would struggle to keep up with the latest researchbased strategies and resources without content consultant experts in literacy, math, science, social studies, talent and gifted, English language learning, early childhood, technology, and more. They dont have the staff to keep up with all of that on their own. They would have to contract out for that along with services like hearing checks, which would be a strain on schools financially and would be assuming they can find people or agencies with which to contract. Schools would also have a hard time addressing the mental health needs of students, staff, and communities through crisis teams, like they did in Perry recently.I am even aware of an instance where the AEA is providing administration support right now. A small district with 2.5 administrators is without one of their administrators right now for health reasons. The AEA is stepping up to provide support to the district as they struggle to assume those extra responsibilities in the administrators absence. At a recent board meeting, both of the remaining administrators and the school board expressed great appreciation to the AEA and how invaluable the support was seen at this time. They would be scrambling without that additional support.General education teachers would not be able to help students as well without AEA professional development to help them improve their practices. They would not be able to access any of the many media resources, which they use quite regularly, both physical ones and online ones. There is no way schools would be able to purchase the amount or variety of resources the AEA makes available to teachers without the AEA having the materials available for districts to share. It would be a logistics nightmare for schools to try to purchase and share materials themselves, let alone have the financial capability to do so.Weve heard a lot about the proposed reason for the changes being to have more focus on special education. Students with special education needs are by definition general education students first and foremost. In special education, we talk about students needing to be in the least restrictive environment, meaning having instruction with samegrade peers as much as possible as long as their needs are being met and they are making needed growth. If resources for schools and general education teachers are taken away, it

would make it that much harder for schools and teachers to meet the needs of students with special needs, too. Special educators also access the expertise of the content consultants, media services, and more that this bill proposes eliminating. As a parent and grandparent, I worry about the quality of the educational experience my middle school daughter and my preschool granddaughter would have. My daughter, who is part of another special needs group as a talented and gifted student, has benefitted from enrichment programs through the AEA such as the Battle of the Books and STEM activities. These programs have helped keep her challenged and excited about learning.

Name: Jennifer St. Peter

Comment: I am opposed to HSB 542 and I am asking you to please oppose it as well. I am in support of increased teacher compensation. Tearing apart the AEA system will negatively impact my work as a Special Education Consultant in my rural districts. They rely heavily on all AEA services. Students, teachers, and I rely heavily on the Educational and Assistive Technology Consultants. Teachers I work with use the Media and Technology resources daily in their classrooms. The Educational Consultants support my work through MTSS. Their guidance improves intervention and core instruction to reduce the number of students who potentially need to be evaluated. I strongly oppose any bill which guts the services of the AEA and devalues the hundreds of highly skilled AEA professionals. I ask that you please review the bill thoroughly and take time to understand what the AEA truly provides to all students, families, and teachers, in Iowa.

Name: Sarah Downey

Comment: Gov Reynolds and Education committee members, I would like to express my deep concerns with HSB 542 and the effects this bill would have on teachers and students across the State. I am in full support of an increase in teacher pay. Teachers are asked to take on way too many responsibilities and manage an increase in behavior due to lack of mental health services and increased need for counseling. This is where the AEAs help support by providing daily support with teachers in classrooms, problem solving meetings, data collection and analysis, and professional development. Now is not a time to decrease teacher support just because you increase their pay. Districts do not have the personnel or financial abilities to support teachers with all the services and support they need. They rely on AEA staff in many different capacities to meet their needs. This bill would strip districts of those supports, especially in more rural districts. Please take the time need to fully assess our educational needs before stripping away all of these services from our schools.

Name: Valerie Heath

Comment: Please vote no HSB 542 AEAs are essential to our communities and education system

Name: Marlin Jeffers

Comment: To whom it may concern, I would like to express my opposition and concern with House Study Bill 542. When I was a young teacher my wife delivered our twins 6 weeks early. We had many days of no knowing if they would live, they made a turn around and they said they would experience some delays. We were told to contact our Early Childhood Department at that time at Western Hills AEA now Northwest AEA. The caring consultants of a early childhood consultant, hearing, Speech Language Pathologist, School Psychologist and Social Worker. They came into our home and provided services to assist in their development. They also worked with us knowing we were young parents and were teachers. We can never thank them enough for their work and support. As they grew they did experience delays but the AEAs helped us as they did to get them ready for Kindergarten. Our twins had the experience of the TOTS class and a class to be social with other children as well as finding a preschool that would assist them. By the time they were 5 they were ready

for Kindergarten only because of the AEAs. The AEAs did this for my twins. They graduated high school and attended college. They are now in their early 30's. We can never thank them enough for their work and support. As a young teacher I experienced many experts in the Educational Services Division and Media Technology Division to assist me with my first several years to be successful. After seventeen years I was a teacher/curriculum coordinator. I used the AEA Educational Services and Media consultants for many things such as classroom management, media materials to supplement my curriculum, curriculum writing, grants to bring to my schools, how to effectively accommodate special needs students in my classroom. These professionals to this day are the mentors and heroes of my teaching success. I also experienced many AEA special education staff for Autism Training, Speech, Reading Strategies, Instructional Strategies as well as Behavior Management for all students. After seventeen years of teaching and using the AEA services, two consultants said that I should apply to the AEA as a consultant. I was hired and worked as a Educational Consultant in Educational Services where I consulted in many schools in a number of topics during this time. I also collaborated with Special Education staff in so many ways for Special Education and Regular Education students. The Governor's plan hurts students, administrators, teachers and staff. I trained many bus drivers, para educators, nurses, secretaries and lunchroom staff how to work effectively with students and their families. Iowa has this system established and it is right for all public, private and homeschoolers. I urge you to keep the AEAs as they are for all students of Iowa. Don't change something that works. The only part of this bill that is acceptable is the raising teacher pay. One area left out of this bill are the raising salaries for support staff, they are a team for student success. Please oppose House Study Bill 542.

Name: Gayle Ver Helst

Comment: Please vote no to this bill to weaken AEAs and by extension weaken our educational system in Iowa. Begin by separating any legislation to increase teacher pay from the reduction of AEA support. Take time to get all the appropriate people at the table, people from Iowa: parents, teachers, principals, superintendents, people from AEAs who are out there doing the work so that the full scope of what AEAs provide can be understood. The work AEAs do are game changers. They are involved in districts and district work at many levels. As a speech language pathologist I chose the AEAs and have continued to choose them for the last 25 years, because I know the impact they make with kids, families, teachers, schools, communities and districts. As the parent of a child with Autism, I have gotten to experience the help of the AEA from a different lens, helping my daughter get the right supports in place and problem solve as challenges came up along the way. Not only has our family utilized special education supports. They have utilized intervention supports to prevent the need for special education support, interventions in occupational therapy for hand writing. Where do intervention services fit in this new model? As a professional I have walked side by side helping parents and families navigate supports and services. What AEAs do is in purpose with a purpose and it makes a difference for Iowans. I see many classrooms benefiting from resources, printing, web based programs, trainings, and a host of other services all provided by the AEA! Please listen to your fellow Iowans and vote no!!

Name: Rachael Tschopp

Comment: To whom it may concern: I am writing to express my opposition of this bill. So many communities rely on the services provided by the AEAs. The governor has already taken away PUBLIC funding from PUBLIC schools which directly impact so many children. Please think about the kids and how your choices impact their futures.

Name: Jennifer Meier

Comment: I am writing to you today in opposition of HSB542. While I fully support an increase in teacher pay, to not only new teachers, but ALL educators. HSB542 is not the answer. Area AEA services, resources and STAFF should not be cut. The resources,

services, and training AEA's provide across the state cannot be replaced by private services. Access is a major issue and so is capacity for schools to take this on themselves, especially in rural areas. Teachers need AEAs. Students need AEAs. Administrators need AEAs. As a parent of a student with a disability that has utilized Area Education Agency resources, the AEA's are critical to so many students, teachers, staff and administrators. I am a former educator that attended the University of Iowa, and my husband grew up in Iowa, attending Iowa schools. I taught in Colorado and we moved back to Nevada, Iowa for the top notch Education opportunities and resources that Iowa schools offer. After having children, our son worked with the speech pathologist from the AEA in our district. She provided services and support that I can only describe as irreplaceable. We have spoken with our AEA school psychologist when we had no where else to turn for our child's mental health issues when there was no where else to go. Counseling services in our area were booked out 810 months and many not even taking new patients. (A much larger issue in our state, but I'll save that for another time.)I know that these are only some of the resources provided by the AEAs and I cannot imagine if our son or daughter needed other supportive services and they were not available. As a former state employee, I know the limited capacity that each of the Department of Education employees have, and taking away AEA staff members, that are highly trained, certified, and are able to build and foster relationships within their local districts, is NOT the answer nor is it safe to say cutting thousands of AEA employees and replacing them with 30 DoE staff will cut it. We need MORE disability and mental health resources for our children, teachers, staff and administrators, NOT LESS. I am begging you to ask questions, understand all that you can about what this bill means to SO MANY and to support AEAs in our state and to NOT support the proposed bill. Jennifer MeierNevada, Iowa

Name: Daniel Carver

Comment: I am an elementary school computer science teacher in Iowa and I rely on all the services that the AEAs currently provide. From my experience, the special education support that the staff from the AEA gives our school is phenomenal, with AEA staff members doing everything in their power to help the students in our district. The cuts to the professional support side of the AEAs would be devastating. Computer science has been a priority of the governor and recently has been required for schools to offer K12. But since it's a relatively new subject to be in the classrooms, there is a lot of training and support that computer science teachers like me need. The AEAs have been indispensable when it comes to supporting the learning around computer science for all grades. They have offered and supported professional development opportunities, they facilitate a network of computer science teachers in the state, and they keep me up to date with the latest changes in the field of computer science. They have a resource library with things like robots that I can check out and use with my students to reinforce computer science concepts like coding. To completely remove the professional learning division of the AEAs would be catastrophic to what and how I'm able to teach. I understand that "technically" the AEAs continue to exist in this bill, but if you change how they are funded, remove who participates, and cut the services they provide, you essentially cripple them. If changes to special education need to happen, this bill is not the way. Vote no to HSB 542.

Name: Kim Manley

Comment: Im here to address my concerns over HSB 542. While the increase in teachers pay is something sorely needed in Iowa, the detriment felt by stripping the AEA is a terrible idea and will be felt statewide. I I am opposed to the action towards AEA presented in this bill. Please review and put some thought into this bill. Meet with AEA members to work out a logical solution. This should not be handled under the table as it has been thus far. Thank you.

Name: Holly Long-DeWolf

Comment: I have been a social worker in Iowa for 35 years, the past 25 years with Heartland

AEA. I am currently off contract on a snow/cold day. I oppose HSB 542. I do agree teachers need an increased base salary. They also need easy access to professionals outside their area of expertise. This bill takes that away from them. This bill should be immediately dismissed and a group formed to study what changes rural schools would actually like to see.

Name: Barbara Puffinbarger

Comment: I am strongly against bill HSB 542. We need to preserve our teacher resources such as the AEA and we want a teacher pay raise, that is not just a possible 1 time only. The school systems are already underfunded. You as the governor and representatives should fund the ongoing funding to sustain better educators' benefits and pay. Without either is a huge strain on education in Iowa. Many states are already struggling to keep and retain the best teachers why are we with would we want to harm the education system. We need to be adding money and improving the system, not dismantling it.

Name: Marci Grant

Comment: I'd like to share concerns I have about HSB 542. I can only imagine the number of bills that come at you this week and want to make sure you are aware of the impact of HSB 542 on the kids of our community. These are the services that would impact our kids and have personally have two in the public school system. Many of my colleagues will lose their jobs! Media services provides virtual welding programs to schools, VR services, book bundles, etc. Professional Development requirements are done through the AEA to ensure updated and current teaching practices. These categories are not special education services and therefore school districts would have to use the money out of their general funds. This does not come out of the special education money she is giving the schools to use as they wish.... Again please do not rush this bill through and give it the time and consideration it deserves. Also, how can the DE and the governor post jobs for the changes this bill provides without it being passed. Is this new government a democracy or did she single handedly change this to a dictatorship? Finally, the "extra" support Perry schools received were from their local Heartland AEA (crisis team, counselors, etc). I do however support the increase in teachers pay, but how is this gonna be sustained? Are you going to continue to help fund this?

Name: Makenzie Stoffer

Comment: I ask that you please vote no for this bill. Iowa AEA provides necessary services to our rural communities. They are so important to the success of all students and make impactful results every single day. Iowa needs to start putting all citizens first and think about our future!

Name: BARBARA Meyer

Comment: The PROPOSED HSB 542 restructuring of the Iowa AEAs is going to have tragic consequences for Iowa students! As a retired teacher and parent of a child needing the services that will be cut, I am baffled on how anyone thinks stripping the services of the AEAs is a positive change. I IMPLORE you to focus on the needs of schools to create the BEST learning environment for kids and NOT IN THE MONEY!!!!

Name: Bethany Luensmann

Comment: Please vote no on HSB 542. Area education agencies are essential to our public schools and as a teacher in the Norwalk Community School District this is important to me so that not only myself and fellow teachers can be supported to the fullest extent as we have been, but so that students can be also. Students will suffer immensely if HSB 542 passes. Please vote NO!!

Name: Thelma O'Neil

Comment: Please preserve the services available to all children in Iowa provided by the AEA. The support among parents and teachers has given all the reasons the AEAs should

continue. Further study of the long term effects is required to avoid unexpected damage to our state.

Name: Amber Lynch

Comment: Please vote No on HSB 542. As a parent of two children in Des Moines public schools, the AEAs provide critical support to our teachers and school staff. I believe this as a parent, as an Iowan, and as the mother of a diabetic child. The trainings that the AEAs provide ensure my daughters teachers know how to handle her condition and keep her safe when she is at school.

Name: Jaci Conard Jarmes

Comment: I am writing to share my concerns with HSB 542. All students in Iowa need quality classroom instruction. All teachers in Iowa need quality professional learning to be able to provide the instruction that all students need and deserve. Eliminating the educational services and media/tech services from the AEAs will impact a teacher's access to professional learning opportunities and materials. I am currently the instructional services coordinator at Great Prairie AEA. I am a certified LETRS trainer and active in providing professional learning for teachers in the Science of Reading, as well as coaching teachers as they implement their new learning. I am also an IDEADA Specially Designed Instruction trainer and have worked closely with the Iowa Department of Education to develop Iowa's learning modules for teachers. I am proud of the collaborative work between the school and AEA that we have done and the results we are starting to see in student performance. Please look closely at the AEA services that are being eliminated. If we want to close the achievement gap, we need professionals with expertise in literacy, a passion for teaching, and the dedication to students to get the work done. Iowa students and teachers need me and my colleagues.

Name: Barbara Krieger

Comment: I am against this bill because it removes needed supports for all students in Iowa. AEAs support schools and families with special education, technology and media that schools can not afford to provide. They help parents with services that they can not afford. This bill is a detriment to all of Iowa. Many teachers and families wish their states provided what our AEA system provides.

Name: Bailey Warnke

Comment: Please vote NO to this bill! The AEA has been apart of our lives for 6 years and my son would not be meeting the physical and academic milestones he is without their support. The impact the AEA has on all of the students, teachers and families is shown every single day and dismantling the AEA would be the absolute worst thing to do! Think about the children!! We love and NEED our AEA!!

Name: Emily Donovan

Comment: I am writing to express my strong opposition to HSB 542 and its potential impact on the specialized support that students across Iowa receive, particularly those with behavioral disabilities. I am a licensed independent social worker and a boardcertified behavior analyst who worked with Heartland AEA for nearly two decades, dedicating 17 years to the Challenging Behavior and Autism Team (CBAT).As part of CBAT, we underwent advanced training through a collaborative project between the Iowa Department of Education, AEAs, and The University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics. Our mission was to conduct advanced assessments and develop behavior intervention plans tailored to the intense needs of students with behavioral disabilities. This initiative significantly reduced the number of outofdistrict and outofstate placements, offering more costeffective solutions for the state.If HSB 542 passes, it threatens to undermine the equal access that students across the state currently have to highly specialized practitioners. This, in turn, may lead to an unfortunate increase in outofdistrict/state placements, ultimately contradicting the bill's intended goals. I strongly believe that maintaining access to

specialized practitioners is crucial to ensuring that students receive the tailored support they need for their unique challenges. While I appreciate the focus on increased teacher pay, I also advocate for more classroom management courses in teacher preparation programs and less segregation of students with disabilities. My experience as an SEBMH lead during the last two years of my tenure at Heartland AEA highlighted the importance of a systematic approach to addressing behavior and mental health. Proactive support for wellness, coupled with tiered interventions, can mitigate concerns and prevent the escalation of issues that contribute to teacher burnout and shortages. It is vital to acknowledge the invaluable role teachers play in shaping the future of our society. I encourage you to reconsider HSB 542, ensuring that it does not strip away the resources and support that AEAs have provided for decades. Instead, let us work together to foster an educational environment that respects teachers, honors their contribution to society by increasing their pay, and supports them adequately in creating productive, creative, and contributing members of our community. Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I trust you will consider the longterm impact HSB 542 may have on Iowa's education system.

Name: Denise White-Staecker

Comment: I respectfully ask that you oppose HSB 542. I am a school social worker at Heartland AEA. Statements about the AEAs made by Governor Reynolds during her legislative address were full of misinformation. AEAs were originally developed to provide equal access to media, education services, and special education resources for schools in rural and urban areas. Because of the flow through money, we have been able to provide media services that benefit all students and teachers. Teachers can check out books, science kits, and use digital resources like bookflix with their entire class. We provide hearing screenings at no cost. When special education laws change we train teachers on those changes. Teachers can take professional development from us to earn license renewal credit for as low as \$25. We provide a myriad of professional development to teachers and associates on best practices to increase student success. We train and support schools on school wide behavior supports and multi tiered systems of supports. Special education students are first and foremost general education students. Without AEA general education supports, students are more likely to fall through the cracks and miss being identified for small group interventions. AEA staff help with data reviews from statewide assessments to help identify students who need interventions. This is not special education. Many students benefit from these intervention groups to boost their skills and avoid the need for more intensive 1, specially designed instruction through special education. My daughter is one of those students who benefited from the support our AEA provided to our districts general education teachers. My daughter was in reading comprehension groups to help address low test scores on statewide assessments. She was always a "bubble" student with scores right at benchmark or slightly below. Thankfully she received targeted instruction that allowed her to continue to make progress along with her peers! I encourage you to learn more about the supports AEAs provide. Hundreds of us across the state are fighting for our jobs, but we are also fighting for the kids, families, and teachers we've worked with over the years (21 years for me). Who knows if we will continue to have those relationships certainly not if other agencies are contracted to provide special education services. I work countless hours of overtime and sacrifice time with my own family to prioritize helping someone else's child, and I receive no overtime pay. I do it because I care. I care about our students, and I care about supporting my coworkers as we team together to do hard work this is not understood and often unappreciated. It's important you know how much is at stake by changing the system to fee for services paid by each district and eliminating media, professional development, and educational supports. I urge you to oppose this bill, and create separate legislation giving teachers the pay raises they so greatly deserve!

Name: Whitney McWilliams

Comment: Please I sincerely urge you to keep the AEA intact & vote against HSB542. My son

has greatly benefited from the services provided and by cutting the AEA services, you are dismantling access my son and other kids desperately need. The bill is NOT in support of students. Please I urge you to vote AGAINST the HSB542 bill.

Name: Greg Orwoll

Comment: This bill needs to be rejected out of hand. It is written and influenced by out of state money and it serves no good purpose other than promoting the further eroding of the quality of public education in Iowa. Only if you, as a legislator, can clearly define what aspects of public education will IMPROVE because of this bill should you support it. And you cant. Our priority in Iowa should be nothing less than the finest and most effective public education system in the nation. And we start by adequately funding public education, including the critical and irreplaceable services the AEA system provides. The legislature owes the AEA system a 5% budget increase for the current fiscal year they should have received plus another 5% increase for next fiscal year. You will not achieve excellence by cutting funding and programs. To my Republican representatives... do what is right for the vast majority of citizens in Iowa and do your part to fully fund services, not increase tax cuts.

Name: Robert Deckard

Comment: I am writing to express my opposition of this bill. Rural communities rely on the AEAs services. The governor has already taken away PUBLIC funding from PUBLIC schools which directly impacts rural communities. Our kids deserve better.

Name: Somer Muller

Comment: I would like to express my concerns with HSB 542 and the effects this bill would have on teachers and students across our state. I am in full support of an increase in teacher pay. Teachers are asked to take on more and more responsibilities and manage an increase in behavior partly due to the lack of mental health services and increased need for counseling. AEAs have crisis teams in place to help school district in time of need. The AEAs help support by providing daily support with teachers in classrooms, problem solving meetings, data collection and analysis, and professional development. Now is not a time to decrease teacher support. Districts do not have the personnel or finances to support teachers with all the services and support they need. If school district needed to contract with outside providers, it could take months before students would receive services that they would get weekly or daily with the AEA. Schools rely on AEA staff to provide these needs especially our rural districts that may not have providers in their communities. This bill would strip districts those supports. Please take the time needed to fully assess our educational needs before taking away all of these services from our schools.

Name: Heather Smith-Schuldt

Comment: Please vote no to this bill. While raising teacher pay is a needed aspect for our state, that needs to be separated from this bill. Dismantling the AEA system (a system that supports ALL students) would be a detriment to our state. Our AEA is greatly regarded as one of the finest in this country and they do go through reviews. Please look at what the DE has said about all 9 AEAs from the past accreditation visits. We have a system to be proud of and we are open to changes. Please consider who wrote this horrific bill and their own lack of understanding of Iowa and who this will impact.

Name: Jessica Kite

Comment: My 20+ years as an educator are on the line due to this bill. Along with 1,000 of my fellow educators, we will lose our jobs if this educationcutting bill is approved. I fail to see the logic in cutting thousands of educational leaders careers for the purpose of improving education. I fail to see how cutting continuous growth for teachers helps them improve their teaching and students scores. I fail to see how it can be called increasing funding for teacher salaries when the reality is that youre cutting funding significantly. Moving around the money and killing jobs does not make for a stronger

system. Its smoke and mirrors and we, educators, deserve better. Teachers deserve a pay raise without it being off the backs of their colleagues. It's shameful what this state has done to damage education. Please save my career I have been passionate about for more than 20 years.

Name: Missy Springsteen-Haupt

Comment: As a former rural teacher, I cannot express how the proposed changes to AEA will create even bigger gaps between rural students and their suburban peers. AEA services are invaluable for teachers who do not have large budgets and students who attend small schools. No good can come from this bill.

Name: Kerri Levi

Comment: Please vote no on HSB 542. Area education agencies are essential to our public schools and as a teacher and parent in the Norwalk School District this is important to me. The AEA and the professional development that they have provided have helped me as an instructional coach. Their trainings have helped me to support new teachers as they begin their professions. The Heartland AEA supported our district during times of crisis. The Crisis Support Team provided mental health professionals and services when we lost a student by suicide. The AEAs also provide support to the teachers who work with my son who has dyslexia. They have helped with assistive technology, LETRS training, and speech pathology in order to make sure he receives the education he deserves. The AEAs in this state provide access to resources and support that the schools could not afford to provide otherwise.

Name: Jill Neas

Comment: To Governor Reynolds, and the House Education Committee, I am writing today as an adult who received AEA services as a child, a parent of a child who receives AEA services, a former teacher, and an AEA employee who has served rural and metro schools. The proposed bill, HSB542, will truly harm ALL of the students in Iowa, especially rural areas with fewer resources. The AEA system is much more than special education services. The AEA system was created to support media services, and general education services in addition to special education. Yes, the scope of services has changed in the nearly 50 years they have been in existence, but education has also changed in those 50 years. The AEA system has evolved to meet the needs of schools. Each AEA also undergoes Department of Education accreditation visits, similar to those of school districts, and have undergone multiple studies to look at services, and how to best meet the needs of the schools, families, and students. This includes services to the accredited non public (private) schools in Iowa. The current proposal does not take into account many of the services that the AEA system offers, and does not provide funding for these services. Additionally, what will remain will be a fractured system, and the consistency of services will vary depending on what part of the state the child who needs support happens to live. It also removes local control, as the AEA board of directors, which is similar to the school board for each AEA, will no longer have the local control to choose the best way to provide services in their part of the state. I could go on, and on, but as I have scanned the comments of others I have seen many other points offered for you all to consider. I leave you with this. HSB 542 will dismantle the AEA system, and is harmful for ALL students in Iowa.

Name: Erin Kozitza

Comment: I have emailed both education committees personally but strongly advocate against this proposal and urge a vote no.

Name: Jasmine Young

Comment: This bill is going to disproportionately affect students and kids in rural districts. It's not going to help districts and families have more choice. It's going to be inefficient compared to what is currently being provided if this bill goes through into law.

Name: Matt Heston

Comment: I am writing to voice my opinion against HSB 542. I am all for paying teachers more, but not at the expense of our AEAs. The AEA system has been very beneficial to me as a youth, to me as a parent of a special needs child, and to me as an educator. The efforts made by the entire team at Heartland AEA on behalf of my son, from 1 week after he was born continuing until he graduated from high school last year was amazing. The AEA provided therapies that he could not receive privately (due to our location), they connected us with people throughout the country to help us in a variety of situations. The AEA helped set us up with my son's adaptive technology company that continues to serve us. My son's speech therapist went to trainings on her own time to learn his communication device, so she could help him and us learn to use it to its fullest capacity. The AEA is such a valuable entity to rural school districts. The state of Iowa did a great job helping to create this system which helps rural districts be able to serve their students at the highest level. My wife and I are members of online support groups for parents of children with special needs. Parents in other states are envious of our AEA system. They can't believe we have this "amazing entity" that helps our students throughout their young lives. As with anything, I am sure there are things that can be done to save money in the AEA system. However, this bill completely dismantles our great system that continues to excel in serving the most vulnerable of our children. Thank you for your time. Matt Heston Monroe, IA

Name: Anne Gullion

Comment: I am opposed to the changes regarding AEA services. As a special education teacher, I'd be lost without these supports. The AEA provides precious resources for us in a very difficult and ever changing teaching profession, while in the middle of a mental health crisis. The students and teachers in Iowa deserve the very best!

Name: Jodi Solomon

Comment: The AEA provides so many services for the children of Iowa and our teachers. How will these services be provided if the AEA is no longer able to do the things they do today? Nothing should be voted out until there is a realistic solution in place that addresses every single service they provide today. If not, there will be so many families and districts left without the resources they need. Iowa cannot keep taking money and resources away from our education system. It's actions like this bill that continue to make our education system fail our children. It's not because of the educators, it's because of the lack of support from our State government that is only setting them up to fail. It's great that increased teacher pay is a part of this, but as a onetime payout. It should be an annual increase that is counted upon within their regular salaries.

Name: Susan Mitchell

Comment: I'm a parent of a son with special needs. Our son is now 38 years old, lives in a house with 2 other special needs men and works at a local restaurant. When he was born we were told he would never live independently. His IQ is not high, he consistently tests around 58 but he does well in this world. He does not have live in staff but gets a few hours a week of staff time. He rides the city bus to work and back home. He handles his own check book on a daily basis but I am his payee and balance his checkbook. He is kind, considerate and confident. He started getting AEA services when he was very young. These services not only benefited him but our whole family. He was fully included in the Washington, Iowa school district and I have been told on many occasions that his being involved with his classmates not only benefited him but also his classmates. Our other 2 children attended College for Kids which greatly benefited them. The AEA staff were very helpful and respectful to our family. Small school districts need AEAs so that their students can get the same quality of support that larger districts can afford on their own.

Name: Sarah Norvell

Comment: To whom it may concern, I am a special education teacher at Keokuk Community School District. I rely on the services and supports provided by the AEA to serve my students. The AEA consultants I work with ensure that opportunities are available for ALL students to benefit. They will speak up for student rights and help administrators to understand student needs. I work very closely with my AEA team and could not imagine teaching without them. We co plan monthly and co teach every Wednesday. I have leaned a great deal from working with AEA consultants.

Name: Carrie Hester

Comment: To whom it may concern, I hope you are doing well and staying warm! I I would like to verbalize my opposition, and the potential ramifications of HSB 542 if it is passed. I implore you to read this document created and recently updated by the Department of Education. It is Iowa's Specially Designed Instruction Framework. Again, I know you are busy reading and responding to countless emails so even if you only have time to read the first two pages I think it will shed light on the fact that HBS 542 is in direct contrast to Iowa's Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) Framework. I want to reach the Governor's goal of improving the success of Iowa's special education students; I think you'll find this document is clear on how to properly do so. <https://educate.iowa.gov/media/4442/download?inline=I> am also sharing the bottom information that comes directly from the Iowa Department of Education website that can be found by going to About Iowas Education System because the current way that the AEA is set up was considered acceptable just over six months ago after the new Director of Education was hired at the end of June of 2023. Please look at the second paragraph where it states that the Iowa system is widely regarded as one of the most foremost regional service systems in the country. I sincerely hope you know I appreciate the important and impactful work you do for our great state. Respectfully, Carrie Hester The AEAs work as educational partners with public and accredited private schools. Agency staff members, school staff, and families work together to help all children reach their highest potential. As intermediate agencies, AEAs offer the kinds of services that can be most efficiently and economically provided on a regional or cooperative basis among school districts. The Iowa system is widely regarded as one of the foremost regional service systems in the country. AEA programs and services fall under nine state standards on which AEAs are accredited. Specific programs are outlined in each agency's Comprehensive Improvement Plan.

Name: Bonnie Peevler

Comment: HSB 542 while I support the teacher pay increase of this bill, I DO NOT support the restructuring of Area Education Agencies. AEAs level the playing field, so that every student in Iowa is entitled to the same level of services. Rural, school districts, and rural students would be greatly impacted if they did not have access to these valuable services. As a school psychologist, I took a job in Iowa based upon, the support and services offered by the AEA s. I urge you to vote no on passage of this bill.

Name: Kim Wise

Comment: I oppose this bill. I am a mom of four Iowa students and a former school board member for 12 years. Our AEAs were essential to the education of our four kids all graduates of AHSTW. Without ALL services provided they would not have been as successful we relied on general education support, media, etc. As a school board member I am well aware we will NOT be able to replace what this bill will remove even if you doubled our flow through money. This bill is reckless. Please vote no.

Name: Deborah Gilmore

Comment: I am in support for better teacher wages. I am not in support of the actions to the AEA. As a parent the AEA provided testing and communication support for my son

prior to school age and after. As a SPED teacher of 26 years, the AEA is vital to supporting all students and educators in providing educational supports. I could not do my job properly without the ongoing support of the AEA. Please take the time to listen to what the AEAs mean to the education system.

Name: Shannon Wehling

Comment: Dear Legislator,I am the Elementary Principal at Sidney Elementary (PK36) in Sidney.I am writing to you today IMPLORING you to OPPOSE Since the inception of AEAs in the 1970s, they have existed to provide fair, equal, costeffective services across the state in the areas of Special Education, Educational Services (such as literacy and math instruction), Professional Development/Training, Curriculum Support, Social/Emotional/Behavioral Support, Crisis Response Support, Media/Technology Support, Early Access Intervention for Infants and Toddlers, TAG and ELL Support, and so MANY MORE. They provide resources that are too costprohibitive for my RURAL and MOST schools to secure independently. The AEAs resources support all Iowa students, not just those in special education. AEAs follow the standards of service established in Iowa Administrative Code 281 and provide these services to all public schools and accredited private schools within Iowa. My students, staff, families and community rely on the AEA's expertise on a daily basis. I rely on the AEA as a leader of my school. This bill will crush our ability to serve all Iowa students. I EXPECT Iowa and you as our leaders to do better! This bill does not do that!I am concerned that if AEAs are dismantled as HSB 542 calls for it will negatively impact us all!I hope you will join me in opposing this legislation in its current form. The governor promised a study and evaluation of the AEA system, but HSB 542 removes the possibility for any improvement because it eliminates large segments of the system entirely. This bill needs full public transparency and engagement from parents, teachers, administrators, and others that will be directly impacted. I believe theres a better way to improve outcomes for Iowas students. I invite you to visit my school/district. Let me show you the day to day impact that the AEA's have on every child, family and educator that I serve and not just those students with special needs. You have a tough and difficult job ahead of you. We all do! But like you, I have been called to serve and will continue to do so with everything that I am and have. This bill will make the job of educating Iowa's most precious resource, our children, even more difficult.Thank you for your time and service to Iowa.Sincerely,Shannon Wehling

Name: Shannon Wehling

Comment: Dear Legislator,I am the Elementary Principal at Sidney Elementary (PK36) in Sidney.I am writing to you today IMPLORING you to OPPOSE Since the inception of AEAs in the 1970s, they have existed to provide fair, equal, costeffective services across the state in the areas of Special Education, Educational Services (such as literacy and math instruction), Professional Development/Training, Curriculum Support, Social/Emotional/Behavioral Support, Crisis Response Support, Media/Technology Support, Early Access Intervention for Infants and Toddlers, TAG and ELL Support, and so MANY MORE. They provide resources that are too costprohibitive for my RURAL and MOST schools to secure independently. The AEAs resources support all Iowa students, not just those in special education. AEAs follow the standards of service established in Iowa Administrative Code 281 and provide these services to all public schools and accredited private schools within Iowa. My students, staff, families and community rely on the AEA's expertise on a daily basis. I rely on the AEA as a leader of my school. This bill will crush our ability to serve all Iowa students. I EXPECT Iowa and you as our leaders to do better! This bill does not do that!I am concerned that if AEAs are dismantled as HSB 542 calls for it will negatively impact us all!I hope you will join me in opposing this legislation in its current form. The governor promised a study and evaluation of the AEA system, but HSB 542 removes the possibility for any improvement because it eliminates large segments of the system entirely. This bill needs full public transparency and engagement from parents, teachers, administrators, and others that

will be directly impacted. I believe there's a better way to improve outcomes for Iowa students. I invite you to visit my school/district. Let me show you the day to day impact that the AEA's have on every child, family and educator that I serve and not just those students with special needs. You have a tough and difficult job ahead of you. We all do! But like you, I have been called to serve and will continue to do so with everything that I am and have. This bill will make the job of educating Iowa's most precious resource, our children, even more difficult. Thank you for your time and service to Iowa. Sincerely, Shannon Wehling

Name: Chanda Hassett

Comment: Please vote NO on HSB 542. Area education agencies are essential to our public schools and as a teacher in the Norwalk school district this is important to me. ALL students benefit from the support the AEAs provide. They provide resources to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment for all students and teachers. They help strengthen and support students social and emotional needs in a time when this is more important than the general curriculum. They do so much more than support special education and the other support would be lost if AEAs are removed. Schools will not be able to afford to bring in all the supports that AEAs provide regardless of how it's pitched as doable. Please vote NO so we can keep our AEA support for ALL students.

Name: Debra Schwiesow

Comment: I am writing you to strongly oppose the passage of HSB 452. As an Iowa voter I am concerned that limiting AEAs in any way would create undue burdens on all of our school districts, but primarily our rural school districts. Even with the most wellintended supports offered at the state level, it will be impossible to truly understand and support Iowa school districts at the level they are now supported by AEAs. As a retired school psychologist and a psychology professor at Creighton University, I know that students and families do better when there is universal mental health support. The services that AEAs provide are of benefit to those who need specialized services as well as support to school systems as they consider and adopt supports for all their students. Additionally, in crisis situations our local school districts have and continue to call upon AEAs to provide after incident support (as seen in Perry, Iowa) as well as preventive measures in terms of training in suicide and behavioral threat assessment. The further removed from school districts, services become, the less effective they are. The AEAs have been successful in meeting these needs of school districts, as evidenced by LEA satisfaction surveys, and consistently passing accreditation standards set for by the state. Please think about the implications of the changes to AEAs as set forth in this bill. Iowa voters, Iowa students and Iowa families are depending on you to do the right thing.

Name: Julie Bantz

Comment: While I am always in support of better teacher wages, I definitely do not support the recommended changes to the AEA. The services the AEA provides are critical to the education our Iowa students are receiving and the changes currently recommended would have a catastrophic impact on our educational system in the State of Iowa. Please vote NO on the AEA portion of the bill.

Name: Jessica Bailey

Comment: I am commenting to express my opposition of this bill. Rural communities rely on the AEAs services. The governor has already taken away PUBLIC funding from PUBLIC schools which directly impacts rural communities. Our kids deserve better!

Name: Holly Seager

Comment: I want to share my concerns regarding the current house bill proposing drastic changes to our current AEA system. My biggest concern is that students who receive special education services are general Ed students first. They need access to more

than just special Ed services. I am also concerned about how services will be delivered to students. School districts do not have access to professionals to provide all the services the AEA provides nor will they be able to foot the bill for all those services. We as the AEA benefit all students in all areas of the state. We work hard to help meet student needs. I know that our students are scoring well below national standards. This is a system problem not solely an AEA problem. We as a state need to work together to do the best we can to serve all students.

Name: Meredith Hughes

Comment: I strongly OPPOSE HSB542 as it is currently written. This isnt political. This isnt public vs private. This isnt homeschool vs traditional. This isnt about socioeconomics. Republicans have students with disabilities. Democrats have students with disabilities. Private schools utilize our services. Homeschool parents utilize our services. Wealthy families benefit from our services. Low income families benefit from our services. Iowa needs AEAs. The language in HSB542 is indeed vague, and does not provide legislators with the necessary data to make an informed decision with regards to how the AEAs provide crucial services to ALL students across the state. Please connect with your local AEAs. We are more than happy to pull back the curtain, we are always open to constructive criticism and encourage feedback regarding how we can best provide services to students in our area. Replacing 50 years of experience and placing that responsibility on the shoulders of an already burdened education system is frightening. Our AEAs have undergone extensive restructuring. One example being that we have been reduced from 15 agencies across the state to just 9. We applaud the increase in teacher pay, however, we feel it should NOT be tied to this bill. I also feel the increase in their salary will be less than equitable when the support services their local agencies provide are no longer available to them. This bill doesnt just hurt AEAs, it hurts Iowas education system as a whole. Iowa NEEDS AEAs

Name: Stacy Schroeder

Comment: This bill,in its current form, reaffirms my fear the Iowa Legislature is determined to gut public education. The most important role of the AEAs is to provide services to students with special needs. This includes helping both special ed and gen ed teachers help those students reach their goals. These are services desperately needed by students who would not be accepted in private schools.This bill essentially condemns many of those students, who with help,could have gone on to have successful careers, to failure. Perhaps it is time to review Eunice Shriver's view on the need to help all students not just the priveleged.

Name: Kristine Kienzle

Comment: Please gather information from those that will be severely impacted. Iowa views all students as general education students first, and this bill will remove support from ALL gen ed students, teacher support, district support, and special education support. Central Rivers AEA is supporting GMG with an interim superintendent, support in our business office for new staff, Title 1 support, LETTERS training support, printing and graphic design, hours of PD to make sure educators are supported, and using the Media collection to supplement books/computer science equipment/agriculture models and other items we can't afford to purchase. GMG (and all districts) will lose all flowthrough dollars that once supported these services and funds will now be absorbed into the state general budget. Schools can not 'optin' for these services; they would be gone in the proposed bill. The rural schools will suffer the most; we can not afford to support these services internally. Iowa schools will lose the money AND the support.

Name: Paul Wise

Comment: Vote no on this bill. As a life long farmer and father to four, I strongly ask you to vote no. We live in a rural area outside of Avoca. The services the AEA has provided our kids the last 20+ years has been invaluable. They are general ed students but have

benefited from their teachers learning new teaching methods such as the Science Writing Heuristic. They have participated in Math Bowls & TAG services. They've benefited from SEL programs brought to our district from the AEA. They used the digital & media resources daily. This bill takes all of that away. Vote no.

Name: Angie Koebke

Comment: I am writing to urge you to vote no on House Study Bill 542. While a pay increase for educators is much needed, dismantling the AEA is a huge detriment to our students and their families. As an educator for 30+ years, I have used various AEA services to benefit ALL students. As a mother and grandmother, my family has also benefitted. Please think of Iowa's children and vote NO to dismantling the AEA.

Name: Liz Love

Comment: I am writing to express my strong opposition to HSB 542, and ask that you vote against it. As an educator, I can't imagine navigating public education without the invaluable help of the AEA. The AEA provides numerous resources and services that would otherwise be unattainable for many schools, educators, families, and students. It is challenging enough to be an educator right now, and stripping the AEA of services educators heavily rely on to serve their students and families will cause more teacher burn out, and will not help draw new teachers to Iowa. I do, however, strongly support increase in teacher pay.

Name: Jennie Adkins

Comment: I plead with you to reevaluate HSB 542 I am in support of all things that support our teachers but I know along with financial support is the support that AEA provides to Iowa teachers & students. I support the AEA & all they do is there some streamlining that could happen as with all agencies & businesses yes I'm sure there is but dismantling a system that supports Iowa schools from special needs to talented & gifted and every area in between is no way to this. As an AEA employee (off contact due to school closings) I see all the roles that the AEA & their employees play. We are doing more than fighting for our jobs we are fighting for the students that we support everyday. We are fighting for the classrooms that we assist in & we are fighting to be heard that all areas of the AEA are vital to Iowa schools & the future of Iowa students. Please reevaluate this bill please look to all that AEA provides. Thank you for your service to Iowa & hearing what Iowans want.

Name: Shannon Wehling

Comment: I am the Elementary Principal at Sidney Elementary (PK36) in Sidney. I am writing to you today IMPLORING you to OPPOSE HSB 542. Since the inception of AEAs in the 1970s, they have existed to provide fair, equal, cost-effective services across the state in the areas of Special Education, Educational Services (such as literacy and math instruction), Professional Development/Training, Curriculum Support, Social/Emotional/Behavioral Support, Crisis Response Support, Media/Technology Support, Early Access Intervention for Infants and Toddlers, TAG and ELL Support, and so MANY MORE. They provide resources that are too cost-prohibitive for my RURAL and MOST schools to secure independently. The AEAs' resources support all Iowa students, not just those in special education. AEAs follow the standards of service established in Iowa Administrative Code 281 and provide these services to all public schools and accredited private schools within Iowa. My students, staff, families and community rely on the AEA's expertise on a daily basis. I rely on the AEA as a leader of my school. This bill will crush our ability to serve all Iowa students. I EXPECT Iowa and you as our leaders to do better! This bill does not do that! I am concerned that if AEAs are dismantled as HSB 542 calls for it will negatively impact us all! I hope you will join me in opposing this legislation in its current form. The governor promised a study and evaluation of the AEA system, but HSB 542 removes the possibility for any improvement because it eliminates large segments of the system entirely. This bill needs full public transparency and engagement from parents, teachers, administrators, and others that will be directly

impacted. I believe there's a better way to improve outcomes for Iowa's students. I invite you to visit my school/district. Let me show you the day to day impact that the AEA's have on every child, family and educator that I serve and not just those students with special needs. You have a tough and difficult job ahead of you. We all do! But like you, I have been called to serve and will continue to do so with everything that I am and have. This bill will make the job of educating Iowa's most precious resource, our children, even more difficult. Thank you for your time and service to Iowa.

Name: Linda Matheis

Comment: Dear Committee, I have spent 3/4 of my teaching career with MBAEA9. I live in Illinois but please take my comment as I have strong feelings about this. My special needs nephew Branden has benefited so much from all AEA has to offer besides the special education services. He and his family have benefited from the family support provided by the AEA, the initial trials of technology that led him to an appropriate device that helps him speak to us. He talks to his grandma Daily (sometimes several times a day) on the phone while using his device. He benefited from the incomparable paraeducators that were trained by the AEA. The additional supports through vision and hearing when those were in question were also provided through AEA. Branden is now 22 and living the best life he can thanks to family, parents, DCSD and the AEA. We are his village. As for what I'm experiencing. I see how much the gen Ed side of AEA helps not only gen ed students but sped students as well. Because (and I can't emphasize this enough). ALL STUDENTS ARE GENERAL EDUCATION STUDENTS FIRST. (I'm not shouting. Just emphasizing) And if you were to ask me what brings me joy in my career? Every single meeting I've sat in where we've been able to discontinue a goal and/or a service through the combined efforts of student, family, school, and the General AND Sped sides of the AEA. It takes a village. Thank You for your consideration. You are part of the village as well.

Name: Deana Wegner

Comment: I support better teacher wages. However, I do not support the changes to the AEA. They do too much for our state, schools, classrooms, teachers, and most importantly our students. 01162024

Name: Cindy Madden

Comment: The AEA is such an important agency not only for our students/youth, but also for the entire education system including teachers and administrators and families. They provide guidance, direction, education for our educators and the list is too numerous to include all the details. Please do not cut this vital expense.

Name: Becco Reinig

Comment: I am writing not only as a concerned citizen but as a veteran public school teacher. I am asking you to vote against or at least delay and do a study of Iowa's AEAs before it is too late. AEAs are not only beneficial to children but teachers as well. Here are some of the ways that I have used them in my 17 year teaching career. I have learned new science techniques through the AEA and a partnership with the University of Iowa. These science techniques have not only helped my teaching of science but it has also helped the way my kids look at science. Myself as well as hundreds of other teachers were trained by AEA staff as well as Dr. Brian Hand throughout this year's long process of learning. Also throughout my 17 year teaching career I have referred numerous students to such services as: Academic and Emotional supports, assistive technology, hearing services, occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech and language services, as well as vision services. Without these services you are setting up a kid for failure. School districts are already struggling and this bill will only make it worse! Step by step Gov. Reynolds and anyone who votes with her is dismantling public education and pushing Iowa's kids down the ladder.

Name: Jane Peterson

Comment: I am concerned with House Study Bill 542. I strongly urge you to reject this bill. As a Speechlanguage Pathologist for Heartland AEA, I have personally seen the benefits we provide by helping children and youth. I serve two rural school districts, Knoxville and Twin Cedars. If this bill passes and the AEAs are dismantled, rural schools will be harmed. Currently the AEA provides equity of services across all districts. It doesn't matter if a child is in Ankeny or Waukee or a child is in Knoxville or Twin Cedars. The people providing services have the same training and knowledge to provide services. This equity of services is very important to me.

Name: Molly Betsworth

Comment: To Whom It May Concern:I am writing this to express my concern regarding HSB 542. As an individual who has been working in the public and private school settings since 1990, I have seen first hand the support and impact AEA services have had for our students, staff, and families. AEAs provide invaluable, affordable services in a variety of areas for these groups. They support Early Access to post secondary transition, instructional coaching and teacher recertification, mental health and emotional health support/services, OT, PT, speech, access to media and technology, assistive technology services for complex communicators, and the list goes on. I am asking that you do your due diligence to really understand the facts and the impact this bill could have for our schools, students, families, and Iowas education system. Thank you for your time,Molly Betsworth

Name: Kathy Soetmelk

Comment: I am opposed to this bill that would diminish the benefits of Area Education Agencies throughout the state. Iowa historically has a great education system and AEA is a big part of that. Rural schools cannot afford to purchase all of the materials that they can use from AEA. Teachers have great support and educational opportunities through AEA. We want to keep great teachers in our rural communities and not lose them to the cities or out of state. Please vote no on this bill. Thank you.

Name: Taylor Sudmann

Comment: Please vote no to this bill. The AEA does too much in the state of Iowa for our teaching staff and students and this would greatly, negatively effect both.

Name: Crystal McKinney

Comment: The AEA organization is imperative to our childrens education and development. Ultimately, this is privatizing education. The children will suffer and the future of education in Iowa will be bleak. The weight we currently put in teachers is far too high; but the result of this bill will make it unbearable. We simply cannot expect teachers to handle the current workload and add special education, talented and gifted and the many other services offered by AEA. Not only with the special needs children suffer, but so will the talented children and all children in between. The AEA also offers hearing tests and speech therapy. These services will be off campus. Parents will have to pay and make arrangements to get their children to the appointments. Iowa already had an issue hiring teachers. Paras are filling teacher positions because the positions cant be hired. If we expect more you think this will fix the issue? What about all of the people who will lose their jobs in the AEA? The only people who will win with this bill are the politicians lining their pockets. Its isnt the children and it isnt the educators.

Name: Linda Senf

Comment: Please consider this regarding HSB542: Iowa has been in the forefront of public education for many years. I was proud to work in education for 33 years. Please help us stay in that position, and keep our students at the top. Teachers need to know they are valuable assets; please consider pay increases. The AEAs are invaluable in helping thousands of students to achieve their potential. Thank you!

Name: Claire Pittman

Comment: My name is Claire Pittman and I am a lifetime resident of Davenport, Iowa. I come to you not only as an Iowa resident, but as a speech language pathologist for the Mississippi Bend Area Education Agency. I have been fortunate to have served the following districts in my 5 years with the agency: Davenport CSD, Durant CSD, Wilton CSD, and Davenport area preschools. This past year, I have also had the opportunity to support all MBAEA students as part of the Assistive Technology Team. My previous emails have shared my personal story as to how I support general education students as well as work with special education students. As HSB542 currently proposes, school districts would have the option to contract with the AEA for services, can hire their own staff, or can contract with a private company. For the first 5 years of my career, I worked for a number of contract companies that provided services to skilled nursing facilities and other rehab locations. I can offer you a firsthand report that the quality of these services, the significant cost increase to schools, lack of professional development in these service providers, and limited availability in rural areas, will negatively impact our schools, and most definitely our special education students. The options being provided to school districts through this bill are not quality substitutions for what they are currently receiving. I understand that HSB542 proposes "putting the money back into school districts hands." The issue I find with this is that it eliminates the collaborative efforts that the AEA facilitates between our numerous rural districts, as well as our metro areas. All schools, all students, both general education and special education, benefit from shared resources. By eliminating these resources and decreasing the amount of stakeholders as part of the AEA, all services will suffer. Another concern that I have heard is the supposed "lack of review or oversight." I speak for a number of my colleagues in saying that we would welcome review opportunities and suggestions on growth/improvement, over a premature and complete overhaul of the AEAs and their services. I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to continue this dialogue with you and hope to be able to provide you with further insight into how AEAs benefit and support all students. I thank you for your time and services to our communities.

Name: Lora Hadsall

Comment: I would like to say, just how poorly this would affect Iowas children, teachers and resources we have worked so hard to keep. My son had AEA services as an infant and without that intervention, who knows where he would be today. AEA staff are crucial for Iowa families and schools! To the officials who are in favor of this bill, shame on you! The ladies I had in his care team with early intervention stages are phenomenal and answered every question, gave me new ideas to get my little guy to eat when everything else failed. They saw me cry and laugh and watched my son grow and thrive with these women in the AEA. I will forever be grateful for their part and this bill is disgusting and a shame as an Iowan.

Name: Leah Beeman

Comment: I am writing to you today to voice my concerns on HSB 542. I have been a special education teacher in the Johnston Community School District for the past 21 years and greatly depend on the AEA as valuable team members. I collaborate with several AEA team members on a daily basis to help support the needs of the students in my classroom. In the current form that HSB 542 is written, there are several resources that my AEA currently provides that I would no longer have access to that will continue the success of the students in the classroom and other special education students across the state. Governor Reynolds is stating that she wants the AEA to focus on services provided for special education students but how is this possible when she is taking away the services that are provided to so many of our students? In the current form, she indicates that the money will be given to the schools, rather than the AEA, to either use the AEA services (pay them), privately hire it out by using an outside agency or hire their own staff to do this. However, no school district

will ever have the amount of money that it will take to appropriately provide the funding that many special education students require in order to be successful. I teach in a rather big district and even I have concerns with this because I teach a very unique and distinct group of students (significant disabilities). This group of students requires a huge amount of supports that even our big district will not be able to afford. What about the small rural schools? How do you think they are going to pay for all of this? Where do you think they will be able to access their resources? If we don't have our AEA available anymore, many students in many other small districts are going to fall even further behind. In my honest opinion, this is doing the exact opposite of what she thinks that this bill is going to do. Here are some examples of services that I currently use (and this is just a few but some of the most important) in the AEA to help the success of the students in my classroom that will no longer be provided: Assistive Technology and Speech Therapy: these team members currently help provide equipment and communication devices for students to trial so that we are able to help nonverbal or complex communicators learn how to communicate with others. Sometimes a student has to trial 45 devices (sometimes costing several thousand dollars per device) before you can figure out which device works best for that child. The assistive technology team, along with the speech therapist, work together to write up the report and send off to the medical team for the student to determine why the student needs the device and work with insurance to get the device purchased for the student. Who is going to do this if we don't have Assistive technology as a service? Who is going to cover the costs of the trial devices? Who is going to problem solve through the devices along with the family and the teacher to see which device works best? Who is going to work on writing the evaluation report? Who is going to work with the medical team? Who is going to help get the device set up for use when it arrives? Who is going to be responsible for turning in a trial device and getting a new one started? Where does a school district find people to do this and where do they find the money to do this? Currently, we have a fantastic AEA team that will come into the schools and problemsolve with the speech therapist, family, teacher, medical team and other team members for however long it takes to find the right device for a student. Do you really think that will continue to happen without the support of our AEA? What I am hearing in this proposal is that the communication of our students who have complex communication needs does not matter to Governor Reynolds or anyone else who is in support of this bill. What I am also hearing is that we really aren't focusing on our special education kids if we lose this service provided by the AEA. Physical therapy: I can't even begin to tell you the important role this team member has in the daily routines of my students. Without the expertise of the physical therapist, my students will lose all of the access to the wide variety of equipment that we currently have access to so that we can support student mobility in the school environment. Currently, I have several pieces of equipment in my classroom that supports several students in my classroom in a variety of ways physically as many of them are not able to support themselves independently due to medical diagnosis. This equipment allows the students to participate in their education with the most physical support as possible so that they are able to engage to the best of their ability. Without the access to this equipment, some of our students will lose that opportunity to participate in academic routines in other positions. Many of my students are in wheelchairs due to lack of mobility. However, if I am able to get them up into a standing position, it's amazing how much it changes their ability to move in just a way that they are able to have a little bit more independence. The physical therapist is the one who is able to go to the AEA and borrow/loan a piece of equipment that allows this student to stand and gain that piece of independence. These pieces of equipment cost several thousands of dollars and many times the classrooms require several pieces of the same kind of equipment because each student requires a slight modification to the equipment and can't be used for another student. I have 8 students in my classroom this year. If all 8 of them required a piece of equipment for mobility purposes and each piece was \$6,000 (and that's on the cheaper side), that's \$48,000 just for a few pieces of equipment. Where does a district get that money from? Where do the small schools get the money from? How is this helping special education students if we are taking away the ability to

provide equipment from the AEA? How is one district going to be able to afford such astronomical costs from year to year? The physical therapist is the one that does the problem solving to find the best type of equipment to fit the needs of each child. Who is going to come in and do that? Is a school going to be able to hire out private physical therapists to help support the mobility of students so that they can be successful in schools? At our annual IEPs and 3 year reevals, I rely upon my AEA team to help problemsolve through the IEP process and work with the family through any situations that might come up in the IEP. I teach in a secondary school and more often than not, my students have already gone through the initial evaluation process of receiving special education services due to a medical diagnosis. However, there have been certain cases where a student has had a traumatic brain injury and I have been a part of an initial service meeting. As HSB 542 is currently written, the AEA team members will not be a part of our yearly IEPs anymore and won't be allowed in for any problem solving discussions with the family or the school team. I can't even begin to explain to you the amazing discussions we have had during an IEP that has opened up so many new doors for students based on problemsolving discussions with our AEA team members. Our AEA team members know the kids, work with the kids, come in and observe the kids, etc. If a school is going to come in and hire a private person to come in and be a part of an annual review, that person will have no clue about WHO that child is, WHAT that child needs and anything about the family. The family, school and AEA build a relationship together over the year and by using an outside agency for privatehire, you are losing the relationship building piece of teams. In our schools today, there is so much negative talk about how it seems that people don't care, no one takes the time to get to know each other, there aren't relationships built, etc. HSB 542 seems to be following this as well. HSB 542 is taking away the opportunity for families, schools and team members to really get to know each other and do what is best for kids. A private agency could send a different person each time. How is that what is best for kids? Again, what I am hearing in HSB 542, is that only SOME special education services will continue. But what really stands out to me, is that the services that the special education services for the students in my classroom really depend on, are completely going away. While Governor Reynolds can say she isn't taking away services from students, that isn't the truth. She isn't giving the whole truth to the public, the families, the schools or anyone. What Governor Reynolds wants to do it completely dismantle what the AEA currently does and give schools control (financially for services). The services that our students require, won't be able to be afforded by the districts. The services I have listed above are just a small portion of what will be taken away from the students in my classroom. I can't even begin to think how my students will continue to be successful if HSB 542 is passed. HSB 542 will cause a very negative impact on the education of students who have significant disabilities. Not only does HSB 542 effect the students who receive special education students, it will also effect several services that the students in the general education currently have access to as well. One of the big services that would be gone is the access to all media services. This service is open to anyone in the AEA and everyone has a right to use it. This media service allows teachers and other professionals to check out books, videos, technology, etc. to use in the classroom. Teachers are able to check out full units on a topic and have a complete set of books sent to their classroom about a specific topic to enhance student understanding of a given curricular area. These books, several thousand of them, would be removed and no longer accessible to anyone. Do you think that each school district is able to go in and just automatically add several thousand books to their library and media center? Again, all of this costs money and schools are not getting a lot of money each year. The rural schools are going to lose this service and where are they going to get access to additional resources to help support their curriculum. AEA provides books loans out for professional studies to schools. AEA also helps to support the professional learning for teachers. Teachers are required to take so many credit hours every so many years in order to maintain their license. AEA provides wonderful opportunities throughout the entire calendar year, including summer, for teachers to take advantage of these courses. Not every teacher is able to cover the cost of a course through a major university but AEA

makes it financially affordable. As a teacher, I have taken advantage of so many courses offered and it has helped me become a better teacher. AEA courses offer a flexible schedule as well so that I may also continue to teach without missing days of work and continue to be with my family at night. Many schools like to do a book study as a schoolwide professional growth development and AEA helps to support professional learning. AEA helps to support schoolwide learning. HSB is going to take away the opportunity for teachers to continue to receive professional learning and continue to earn licensure renewal credits. This will mean it will take teachers from classrooms in order for them to be able to keep their license. Teachers will have to pay out of pocket for their classes and that cost will be too much for some teachers. The domino effect of this will be that many teachers will choose to walk away from the profession. We already have a hard enough time getting teachers so why are we making it easier for teachers to leave? AEA also helps to support the learning of our paraprofessionals. How can we expect our paraprofessionals to become better at their job if they are not provided opportunities to improve on their learning as well? Many times they go on to become teachers and without these opportunities, we would not retain the associates we continue to keep from year to year. Our associates want to continue to learn alongside the teachers. We want our paraprofessionals to be respected and to be given opportunities to learn and grow. Many districts aren't able to provide learning opportunities for paraprofessionals so this is one way that they are able to do it. HSB 542 is telling me that the paraprofessionals in the field of education do not matter. The AEA provides resources that are too costprohibitive for schools to secure independently. The AEAs resources support all Iowa students, not just those in special education. AEAs follow the standards of service established in Iowa Administrative Code 281 and provide these services to all public schools and accredited private schools within Iowa. The picture below is a list of the services that our AEAs currently provide to students, families, teachers and school districts across the state of Iowa. The highlighted services are current services that would no longer be provided by our AEAs Districts would be responsible to provide those services or hire out the services by private agencies. If districts are not able to afford those services, students, families, teachers and schools will lose many valuable services that our AEA provides. Losing these services in our school will be a huge detriment to Iowas educational system. I hope you will join me in opposing this legislation in its current form. The governor promised a study and evaluation of the AEA system, but HSB 542 removes the possibility for any improvement because it eliminates large segments of the system entirely. This bill needs full public transparency and engagement from parents, teachers, administrators, and others that will be directly impacted. I believe there is a better way to improve outcomes for Iowas students, not just those in special education. The best way to see how things are currently working is to get out in the schools, work with teachers, meet the students and see just how valuable the AEA is to the educational system is to Iowa. The government is going about this the wrong way and is going to hurt the educational system in the state of Iowa to an even greater extent. Iowa is known for the amazing educational programs we offer. HSB 542 is going to tear Iowa's education system apart.

Name: Kate Wise

Comment: Please vote no on this bill. As a graduate of AHSTW, I benefited greatly from AEA general education services. My teacher learned new teaching methods such as the Science Writing Heuristic. We participated in Math Bowls & TAG services. We benefited from SEL programs brought to our district from the AEA. We used the digital & media resources daily. The ways AEAs impacted my education through general education & media services were tremendous and I am now getting my doctorate. Say no to this bill.

Name: Sarah Christian

Comment: I am writing to express my opposition to HSB 542, specifically the portion that eliminates so many vital AEA services. As a parent, teacher, and taxpayer, the

services the AEA provides are absolutely necessary. Please slow this bill down so the impact it will have on schools, including small rural districts can be fully understood. As a teacher, I receive professional development support from our local AEA. This year, I have used their services in regards to classroom behaviors. We had invaluable PD from technology consultants earlier this school year. I could go on and list the many services used by our building alone that without the AEA, would cost our district so much. Of course oversight and reviews are important, but let's please do this in a thoughtful manner and have a plan to make necessary changes. I also understand the importance of raising teacher pay. Please separate these two pieces of the bill as to not pit the AEAs against the teachers, as both of these issues are so very important.

Name: Cheryl Laughlin

Comment: The definition of a system is "a set of things working together as parts of a mechanism or interconnecting network." Currently, the AEA is a system, but if HSB 452 passes, the AEA will be a far cry from it. It will be like a car without an engine and it will get nowhere. Our students deserve better than this! As a mother of 4 children, the AEA has greatly enriched their educational experiences. My children had endless supplies of books to read and AEA consultants in the classroom helping to support and engage them in learning through best practices that were being taught in action beside their teachers. Several of my children needed TAG services, which were also supported by the AEA. Thanks to evidencebased knowledge offered to teachers through professional development and course offerings, my children were able to consistently meet growth scores on their Iowa Assessments (a really hard thing to do when they were already at the top)! When Covid hit, the world of education changed dramatically. The ONLY support system teachers had was the AEA. Data consultants helped teachers learn how to navigate a new world and once students were able to return to the classroom, AEA consultants were every schools' saving grace. Students had significant learning gaps and behavior issues that weren't present prior to Covid. Iowa's AEAs took it upon themselves to take the lead in helping our schools get back on track by working alongside staff to create accelerated learning plans AND most importantly, how to address new behaviors. They emphasized the importance of building relationships with students to create safe, supportive classrooms where students want to come to school. It is a proven fact that all humans, whether they are children or adults, can't be learners when they don't feel safe! If we are in fight/flight mode, the cognition portion of our brain is walled off until safety is reached. Living through a pandemic as a child was difficult. Some students lost loved ones and had their worlds turned upsidedown. If we ignore their need to safe, then we are also disabling their academic learning. AEAs understood this and gave teachers the tools needed to support students and build trust. If the AEAs are reduced to special education services only, they will be rendered useless because they will no longer be a "system" that can support a special education student throughout their day. Special education students spend about 1/10 of their day with their special education teachers. The other 9/10 of their day is spent in their general education classroom. The AEA supports both. It makes no sense to limit them to 1/10 of a child's day, who desperately needs support. I've seen AEA consultants work magic in general education classrooms with ALL students. The effect that it has on special education students is exceptionally impressive! ALL teachers need and rely on their AEAs for uptodate, highquality, instructional practices, so they can help ALL of their students and support special education students throughout their day at school. HSB 452 will cripple our schools and be yet another devastating blow to our teachers. These teachers deserve so much more for what they do! In conversations over the past week, I've heard several say that they are fed up and cannot function without the people and resources from the AEA, and will leave education should this horrific bill pass. We cannot afford to lose these angels! Our rural schools will be especially hit hard. They will no longer have access to vital people with skill sets that they can't hire in their small communities, nor will they be able to afford to hire people from farther away to come to their schools. Our

children will pay the ultimate price because they will be going without the services they are currently receiving. HSB 452 makes no sense whatsoever! It doesn't matter which party you are affiliated with! We are first and foremost, humans. Our little humans look up to us to provide them with what they need to become successful, productive Iowa citizens. Vote this bill down for their sakes, please.

Name: Emily Stiner

Comment: I am writing to express my opposition to HSB 542. I have a child that receives services through Central Rivers AEA. I am concerned that these services will no longer be as integrated, cohesive and comprehensive as they are now. He has been improving so well with the support of the AEA and I hoped that this would be a smooth transition from preschool into his public elementary. I also see the impact of the support that the AEA has provided for our local elementary schools as they navigate the implementation of a new reading curriculum. A huge undertaking that should not be solely put on the shoulder of our classroom teachers and paraprofessionals. Please vote no on this bill and let the AEA continue to support children, families, teachers, and administrators.

Name: Cindy Wheatley

Comment: Im not a parent , Im a grandparent thats concerned of passing Bill 542.I would like to express my opposition on Bill 542.AEAs are essential to our communitys and education system.

Name: Megan Wise

Comment: Please vote no on this bill. As a graduate of AHSTW, I benefited greatly from AEA general education services. My teacher learned new teaching methods such as the Science Writing Heuristic. We participated in Math Bowls & TAG services. We benefited from SEL programs brought to our district from the AEA. We used the digital & media resources daily. The ways AEAs impacted my education through general education & media services were tremendous and I am now getting my doctorate. Say no to this bill.

Name: Kari Rose

Comment: I am a parent, both my children have used the AEA resources. Not only for education purpose but for grieving purposes for school related cases. These services are so very important and the special people who fill these roles are the true heroes. They go above and beyond to make sure students and staff are taken care of and put all their resources to work. I can't imagine a school system without these services!! As a former educator, I have worked with amazing AEA educators. Working with students isn't a walk in the park but it's the most rewarding field of work! The AEA staff can work magic like no other with their students. If this bill were to pass, it would be so hurtful to the school systems and open a crack that a band aid won't cover. As a community resource, I have many AEA members utilizing my building now to provide services to children when school isn't in session. I have no idea the wide variety of services they offer to children but I can visually see these students improving these services! I have no idea how one can take something so great away from a student who is EXCELLING with the services! Please vote NO to this bill!! Iowa children deserves better.

Name: Abby Bowden

Comment: To whom it may concern: I am a preschool teacher at a small rural school. I LOVE my job. I love the fun that me and my students get to have together, I love engaging in play with my students, and I love helping my students learn new and exciting things. I could not make my room a fun, engaging, and developmentally appropriate place without the help of the AEA. The resources, classes, and support they provide is essential in providing an education that my preschoolers NEED and DESERVE. As I tell my students, I'm not a superhero, I can't do everything, but with the help of

the AEA I am a little bit closer to superhero status. Please don't take away what your teachers and students need. Because without the AEA supports our education system will take another big hit and to me, unsustainable.

Name: Kim Cabel

Comment: I am writing to express my opposition to HSB 542. I have experienced the benefits of the AEA system as both an employee and a parent. I wanted to share a brief story regarding my son, Cameron, who was born prematurely in March of 2022. He was only 31 weeks gestation at the time of his birth, and my husband and I were terrified firsttime parents. One of the first of many thoughts that crossed my mind was that he would qualify for developmental services through Iowas Early Access program through the AEA until he turned 3 (a child born before 32 weeks automatically qualified for services due to high risks of developmental delays). Ive laughed about this many times. Why was that my first thought? We had many hurdles to overcome in the NICU before we got to that point. I now realize that I sought comfort in something that I know to be true and effective, at a time where everything felt so unknown and out of our control. Since then, we have had consistent services with PT and a developmental teacher. Our son is developing beautifully, and I can rest easier knowing that I have a team of professionals to reach out to when Im wondering if a concern I see is related to his prematurity or just me being a nervous firsttime mom. Under the current bill proposal, it is unclear how these Early Access services would be provided. Would these services continue to be provided by the AEA? Would the districts now have to provide them? Or some other company? Will families like mine have a lapse in services during a transition period if there are changes to the system? How will that affect my son as he gets closer to school age? How will that affect countless other families who rely on these services before their children come work with me at school? My family and I are concerned about the impacts of significant structural changes to the Early Access program, not only for my child, but for countless other children and families throughout the state relying on these services. We know that early intervention is best practice, and any disruption to services will impact the children of our state significantly.

Name: Christine Morpew

Comment: Regarding HSB 542: I do not support the bill as the rapid and disorderly dismantling of the AEA as proposed would put schools, childrens clinics, social services and Iowas most vulnerable students and their families into chaos when trying to seek or provide services. Stop. Listen to the people that provide and use AEA services. Find the areas of concern and address those concerns. Fix the problem instead of creating greater ones. It would be madness to tear down a house because one faucet was leaking. Yet this seems to be the approach.

Name: Jama Johnson

Comment: I am writing to express my strong opposition to HSB542. I have been a teacher in a small rural district for 25 years. The resources the AEA has provided me have been invaluable. The AEA has provided professional support for educators, specific student support for both general and special education students, media access, crisis support in the loss of a student, and the list goes on. Districts will not be able to replicate these services and support with this bill. It breaks my heart to think of the secondary consequences of this bill and the lack of support and services for the students and teachers of Iowa. We NEED the AEAs. Please preserve the thousands of jobs of highly skilled educators of the AEA that our schools need and rely on by saying NO to this bill. Thank you for your time.

Name: Amy Condon

Comment: 3 of my 5 children have received AEA services. For just one of those children, the AEA came to my home, my childs daycare, or my motherinlaws home and provided free support for my child for 66 weeks. Not only did they help my child, but they

supported me. They provided instruction to me, my daycare provider, and my mother-in-law. They gave us the tools and strategies to practice and support him all week long. They were knowledgeable, professional, and were there to simply support us. They were not worried about meeting quotas or insurance approvals, and that is a tremendous blessing. They do everything with the child and the child's family at the center of all their decisions. Enacting this bill will be catastrophic to Iowa's children and their families. I urge you to vote against this bill and continue to allow these services to remain in place for the families that so desperately need them.

Name: Ashley Nielsen-Wise

Comment: I would like to express my opposition and concern with House Study Bill 542. The proposed bill poses a significant threat to the quality of education that ALL of our children receive. The reduction in funding will have severe consequences for student success, teacher support, and the overall educational resources available to our schools. As someone who was born and raised in small-town Iowa and has decided to return to small-town Iowa to build a family, the reduction in funding of the AEA is a serious concern for future children of the state. I was a direct recipient of assistance through the AEA throughout my educational career at AHST (now AHSTW), not on the special education side of things, but on the advanced talented and gifted side which according to this bill would be no more. I participated in Math Bowls, Quiz Bowls, and many TAG services to advance my education. I benefited from the SEL programs brought into our district from the AEA. Additionally, I was able to utilize the digital and media resources frequently. If I had not had these opportunities, I very well may not be where I am today with my doctoral degree. Smaller schools will bear the brunt of this proposed legislation. Rural schools will struggle to meet the diverse needs of their students, which will exacerbate existing disparities in educational opportunities. The repercussions of this bill extend well beyond the classroom, extending to entire communities and the generation of students. Education is an investment for our future society, and this bill undermines the quality of education and support services, therefore jeopardizing the future success of our state. Say NO to this bill.

Name: Lauri Whiskeyman

Comment: As an employee of the AEA since 2007, I strongly urge you to vote no on HSB 542. AEAs are vital to all Iowa schools. Teachers in school systems are already stretched thin and if AEAs are gutted, then I fear for our students. They will not get what they need. Let's not throw the baby out with the bathwater. If there are things to fix, let's fix them but dismantling AEAs across the state is not the answer.

Name: Sherry Farrell

Comment: Vote NO Bill 542. Do NOT remove AEA services!

Name: Mandy Burns

Comment: I am writing to speak out about my concerns for HSB 542 and the affect it will have on the equity and quality of services available to our students, ESPECIALLY our smaller, rural districts. As with any system, there is always room for improvement. This bill is not about improving services for our students. In fact it most certainly will have the opposite affect. The removal of supports will leave many school districts struggling to find the vast amount of services and support the AEA system currently provides. The DOE itself through their accreditation process and on their own website have stated the AEA system is one of the best regional support systems in the country. We all know data can be skewed to support whatever belief we have. One piece of data provided that is used without full context should not be justification to virtually gut a system that has been successful for so many for over 50 years. Yes by all means keep working to improve the system. Our kids deserve it!!! ALL of our kids because they ALL benefit from AEA services, public or private. While any opportunity to increase teacher salaries is beneficial, HSB 542 does this while crippling small school districts. These two initiatives need to be separated.

Teachers deserve to receive a competitive pay, but doing so without providing them the supports they need through our robust AEA support system will not maintain these teachers. Again this will especially hurt our smaller rural school districts who not be able to provide the level of support our larger districts will. As a mom of 3 children who currently attend East Marshall, a smaller, rural district, wife of a school teacher in the same district, and proud graduate of a class of 36 students from Greene High School, I hope you consider the full negative impact this bill will have on their education. We are a family of proud, small town Iowans because we believe in our educational system. But it will suffer significantly and fear we will no longer be able to say we are providing the best opportunity we can for our children and all children. Thank you for your time.

Name: Matthew Cross

Comment: I am writing to express my strong opposition to HSB542. While I support increased pay for teachers, I do not support the proposed changes to the ANA'S. The AEA system provides equity in support to all districts, schools, teachers, and students in the state of Iowa. As a parent whose son receives services from the AEA, I urge you to vote no to HSB542.

Name: Jennifer Hoerner

Comment: I would like to express my opposition and concern with House Study Bill 542. I plead with you that you vote no for this bill. As an aunt and SLP employed through the AEA, I am a firsthand witness to the detriment it would bring for my preschool students I serve as well as my own family. My nephew, Brooks, receives early access services through the AEA. He was not crawling or walking at the expected milestones and our wonderful PTs and developmental specialist teachers supported my sister, brother in law, and sweet nephew to help him gain the skills he needed to thrive. He made leaps and bounds (is now running) in his journey with early access and he continues to see a developmental teacher to ensure he stays on track for his learning and development. The services provided to him and my family members in support of his growth were unmatched. Where would they receive this help, FREE to them, if it were not for the early access AEA team members? As an SLP who serves early intervention students, I worry for their learning opportunities and supports they receive. How these will look if our AEAs have services removed? I worry for my speech students who receive my services FREE through the AEA as a general education student. Some of my families would not be able to afford taking their children to private speech services. As a member of an education family (teachers, principals, school support staff), how will this affect them in their classrooms? My younger sister, who just received her bachelors in education and is beginning her journey? My mother who is a veteran teacher/coach who benefits from the collaboration with colleagues from the AEA? My older sister, who not only has a child directly impacted, but teaches students who are affected positively by AEA services? My own career in education where I serve not only special education students but general education students? Our students are generally education students first. How will this affect their learning if supports are cut by this bill? I strongly oppose proposed House Bill 542 and would encourage this committee to further research the impact it will have if passed on Iowa students and teachers learning and development.

Name: Gina Walter-Dunn

Comment: I am writing to voice my opposition to the bill that would dismantle the AEA. As a former teacher, I relied on the AEA consistently. From books and media to the assistance of the literacy and math consultants and the special education staff, I relied on those experienced people to help me be a better teacher. Now, as an AEA special education consultant, I get to be the one to help teachers, children and their families. This bill would eliminate so many necessary services and have such a negative impact on education. Families would lose services, teachers would lose services and children would suffer greatly. Please vote no. The overall education of our state

depends on it. Thank you for your time.

Name: Kevin Cole

Comment: Please don't support HSB 542. Smaller rural school districts would be greatly harmed by this bill. AEAs provide much needed services to our education system.

Name: Julie Barwick

Comment: While I support any increase in teacher pay, please vote no on other parts of the bill that strip so many needed services from the AEA. Please invest the time to work with the AEA, School Districts, Parents and the community to find out the needs of the stakeholders instead of going to drastic measures.

Name: Marcia Schlomer

Comment: I am writing to ask you to please vote no to HSB 542. It appears to be moving at a fast pace without much info being provided to the general public. I was a paraprofessional for many years and worked with students that benefited from AEA. Many students were not classified as special ed students but yet utilized services from AEA. I am VERY concerned with the differences I heard from the governor's speech and the facts that are true. Please CAREFULLY get ALL the correct information before doing something that will drastically affect districts and students alike.

Name: Taylar Askelsen

Comment: I urge you to vote no to HSB 542. While I wholeheartedly agree that teachers deserve a raise, I do NOT agree with the proposed changes to the AEA. Growing up in rural Iowa, my family and friends benefited from AEA support, both as general education students and special education students. The majority of my family and friends continue to reside in rural Iowa and I am greatly concerned for the negative impact this will have for them. I have worked as a speech language pathologist for the AEA for the past 10 years. I've had the pleasure of working for two different AEAs and have witnessed first hand the positive impact AEAs have across the state. I'm proud of the support we provide for schools and would be devastated to see it disappear. Thank you for your consideration.

Name: Kelli Robertson

Comment: As a parent of children on 504 plans and speechlanguage pathologist working in the schools for 24+ years, I strongly urge folks to vote NO on this current bill, and blatantly and carelessly cutting whole categories of positions that support the entire educational system and ALL of our students. Although my own children do not currently receive special education services, there is NO DOUBT that the AEA services, supports, and expertise that we have tapped into throughout their PK12 have helped them to be successful at school and become the best version of themselves. From school social work to SEBH to math consultants to the Family Educator Partnership to school psychologists to talented and gifted support, we have known that we could go to the AEA for these supports for our kids. My daughter is a senior (who just received the Williston Jones fulltuition scholarship at Coe College) and she is interested in pursuing school psychology, so that she can help other neurodivergent students like herself understand accommodations and strengths they can use in the classroom to succeed. This is not coincidental. This is due to the impression/impact that our AEA services have had on her from her own experiences. I am all for looking at streamlining and improving efficiency, but simply crossing out entire services and categories of services with a bold red pen without understanding how these services nest to support our students is NOT the answer! Sincerely, Kelli J. Robertson

Name: Christina Richard

Comment: To whom it may concern, We need to keep the many services the AEA has to offer. I

work at AHSTW, a small rural district in Avoca, Iowa. I teach transitional kindergarten. Some of the services I have used through the AEA include: Special education specific training, especially those for students with significant disabilities Digital media resources I have a student who LOVES Book Flix, which we can access for FREE through GHAEA. Physical media: student materials, curriculum I was interested in, professional books Autism Team Support Behavior Team Support Literacy Consultant I participated in the SWIM writing grant and light and shadow grant that was made known to me through my AEA. I have watched counselors descend upon our school from all around after multiple student deaths/accidents have happened at our small district. We need their support to continue. The paraprofessionals I work with have gone through training and have been certified through AEA training. Paraprofessionals work with some of our students with the most needs and who are incredibly vulnerable due to lack of communication and cognitive ability we need people to be well trained and ready to work with this population of students SAFELY and RESPECTFULLY. I have benefitted from support and training as a new special education teacher learning to write new IEPs, laws associated with special education, and more. Early ACCESS services also benefit me because we are able to help students who need it earlier, making significant progress for them a much more real and attainable outcome. This service is huge for helping students with high needs as early as possible. Coaching authorization is key to keeping our schools current and up to date with coaching sports. Blood borne pathogen training is tied Van delivery has also been beneficial when having to send materials to or from different team members I have worked with through the AEA. This list just touches the surface of the many positive and ESSENTIAL things Iowa's AEAs provide to educators on a DAILY basis. Without AEA's our schools and services provided will not run as smoothly and I fear rural districts such as mine will greatly struggle to provide many of these services on our own, even if we team up with nearby districts. I urge you to help keep Iowa's AEAs FULLY in place.

Name: James Oetken

Comment: I do not support this bill it does not continue fund Iowa teacher salaries. It DISMANTLES the AEA systems started in 1974 that provides need support to our schools and students.

Name: michelle wolfe

Comment: To Whom it may concern, I am writing this as a strong opposition to House Study Bill 542. AEA is wonderful resources for schools, teachers, students and our Iowa family. The dismantling of our public schools and our resources further will decline our rankings in education. We should support our teachers and our AEAs. Having used the resources of the AEA as a student and as a former teacher this service is vital to our schools. Let's support our teachers and our AEAs by giving them the resources they need.

Name: LouAnn Whitaker

Comment: The proposed changes to the AEA would be a huge disservice to students in rural Iowa districts. They would lose access to all the shared expertise and services of the AEA for their most vulnerable special needs students.

Name: Amy Parker

Comment: It is an abomination to me that in this century we still need to be talking about equity for kids. The AEA ensures equity for all students by giving access to materials and services that would likely be unrealistic for small school districts to provide. How can the state government in good conscience put our childrens education on the line? When I was young, I remember Iowa being a state that other states looked to as a leader in education. Now, because education means so little to our governing body, young families are choosing to move out of state so their children wont be left behind. We need to take a stand NOW and put education back at the top of our

priorities. Without an emphasis on quality education and resources, Iowa will continue to lose educated professionals to states who do care. As a teacher in this state, we are already giving more than our fair share. There is no way I can provide what the AEA offers. Not only will we lose families, we will lose educators. If the AEA loses, we all lose.

Name: Jeanna Kakavas

Comment: To all voting on this bill: Im writing you as a SLP who works for Mississippi Bend AEA in North Scott Schools and PV schools. I live in Scott County. I graduated from North Scott and UNI. I have never lived anywhere but Iowa. I am passionate about living and working in Iowa and my students. But right now I am terrified about the state of public education in Iowa and what the governors proposal will do if it is passed as written. AEAs have a strong foundation. If you need to remodel the kitchen, you dont blow up the whole house and start from scratch. That is what is being proposed. Schools and students will be left with no house. They will be left scrambling for service providers, materials basic media that they have checked out through the AEA for the last 50 years and no funding to get it. There are so many services the AEA provides that arent be thought about. Birth to three services are a big one. Parent advocates are another. Speciality teams are another area that the AEA has waiting in the wings currently, but just wont be available if this bill goes through. Everyone needs to slow down and think more about what is being proposed and study the current system and keep the good parts before you blow up the whole house.If schools have private companies provide special education services will they know the difference between the medical model and the education model? Right now there are highly trained professionals who know it who are providing these services. Its a lot to explain to parents. All IEP goals need to be educationally driven. There are so many laws and legal frameworks to follow that AEA staff are trained on. If anyone can be hired, that training will be much more difficult for oversight.Please really think through what rural Iowans will be loosing if they cant have equal access to services. That is why we have AEAs to provide equal support to all learners. Not use the ones that live in major cities.Thank you for your time.Jeanna Kakavas

Name: Richard Hanzelka

Comment: Please vote NO on House Study bill 542. School districts across Iowa depend on the AEA services. There may be isolated instances where a superintendent feels he/she knows better than the years of success AEAs have demonstrated, but wisdom should prevail in this case. The AEAs are a total system that assists all schools, and the bill will particularly harm smaller school across the state. One would never remove two of the tires on a car and expect it to still be able to do its duty. Too many districts in the state will be unable to buy the two additional tires and continue to serve all students and teachers. This is simply a bad bill despite the attempt to pretend that special education services will not be harmedof course they will!! And leaving local districts to fend for themselves with teacher inI service and media services and many other services simply lacks wisdom. The AEA system has a long record of successful service and to cherry pick a few critics without REALLY digging into what parents and other educators think simply lacks vision!! VOTE NO!!!!

Name: Katrina Martin

Comment: I am not in favor of the AEA bill. This is not in the best interests of the people in Iowa.

Name: Nicole DeGroot

Comment: I am writing to urge you to oppose House Study Bill 542. As the Level 3 special education teacher in EddyvilleBlakesburgFremont Community School District, the AEA services have been instrumental in supporting both students and staff in our district. As a level 3 special education teacher I serve students with needs ranging from profound Autism to severe behavior disabilities, and everything in between;

each week my students are able to meet with occupation therapists, physical therapists, speech language pathologists, teachers for the deaf and hard of hearing, and the list goes on depending on each individual students needs. Many of my students come from a family that has a low socioeconomic status, as do many of the students in my district; without the AEA these students would not be able to receive the services they need, because their families just do not have the means to make sure they are able to get to those appointments outside of school day. I meet with my district's special education core team at least once a week, often times more, to discuss students' needs, and to bounce ideas off of, and they answer any questions I may have. Without my team, and the AEA resources available to me I would not be able to do my job effectively. The AEA provides so many more services than just those listed above. In my district we utilize PebbleGo, BookFlix, Mystery Science, and so many other educational resources that are provided through Great Prairie AEA. I myself have utilized the media library to check out resources like an Expanded Expression Tool to use with students who have severe cognitive disabilities, or are deaf or hard of hearing. Without the AEA, I would not have access to these resources, tools, books, switches for my nonverbal and/or mobility impaired students to utilize to be able to communicate, complete tasks, and learn ways to be successful in the world outside of the school setting. Our speech language pathologist assigned to our district has utilized the printing available at the AEA to create core word sheets for my nonverbal students as well as posters of core word boards for the general education teacher to utilize in their classrooms to help the students be as successful as possible. I have utilized the AEA to gain continuing education credits for recertification. These credits were in an area that I deeply desired to learn more about to utilize in my classroom, the dyslexia class, for instance was a tremendous help to me. These classes are affordable, local, and a great opportunity for us as teachers to collaborate with others in our field that we may not be able to otherwise, due to time and distance constraints.

Name: Nissa Greenquist

Comment: AEA is so important. It provided speech therapists for me in elementary and middle school in my poverty stricken school district in the 90s. Now as teacher, I use AEA services daily. From the state mandated trainings (blood borne pathogens, right to know, mandatory reporter, school homelessness, etc...) to online databases my students use, to the crisis team sent out when we had a suicide. As a foster parent, my kiddo receives extra services through their IEP and access to social worker and psychologists to help them through trauma. Do not defund the AEA!

Name: Mike Mitchell

Comment: I am writing to oppose House Bill 542. We have a special needs son that has greatly benefited from AEA services. As an adult he has a lifestyle that would not have been possible without the developmental assistance of the agency. Please collect more information from families, students, and school districts before slicing these programs. This bill will hurt Iowans and the public school system.

Name: Taylor Johnson

Comment: I request that you oppose HSB 542. As a 4th grade teacher in the Johnston Community School District, I am reliant on the AEA for guidance, support, and resources every single day. They have provided book sets on nonfiction topics we cannot fund with our budgets, the print assessments and assignments as we do not have enough funding for paper and ink, they provide trainings to ensure safety for our students, among numerous other supports. Passing this would be a huge disservice to our students, teacher, families, and districts. There is nothing positive that could come from this to even begin to outweigh the negatives.

Name: Jennifer Gersten

Comment: To whom it may concern. I would like to express my opposition to House Study Bill 452. Both of my children have directly benefited from AEA services through Grant

Wood AEA, ranging from Early ACCESS that helped my younger daughter with developmental delays, AEA consultants in the school and behavioral supports, as well as college readiness supports for my oldest daughter. I support increasing teacher pay so we can retain our great teachers across this state, but that shouldn't come at the cost of cutting AEA services. Even if our school district would opt to continue to contract with the AEA, with the reduction in AEA staff, the caseload will be extremely large and that will impact the quality of services provided.

Name: Mariah Snyder

Comment: I would like to express my opposition to House Study Bill 542. As an educator in a rural Iowa school district, I utilize support from the AEA daily. My students and fellow educators receive learning experiences provided by the AEA. Curriculum supports in areas of literacy and math are used daily. Talented and gifted support is utilized daily. Classroom resources such as science tools, books, ebook programs are used daily. Crisis support from the AEA is critical in times of hardship for school districts. I will forever be grateful to AEA consultants who have helped me navigate deep waters as an educator. They have supported me, taught me, and led me in the right direction when learning how to analyze data appropriately and getting my students the support they need. The AEA is a critical component of the success of public schools in Iowa.

Name: Allison Drew

Comment: To whom it may concern, I would like to express my opposition and concern with House Study Bill 542. I am a mom of two children with special needs. I would like to share my experiences with Iowas AEA, specifically Prairie Lakes in Fort Dodge. Its been a long journey and I hope you will take it into consideration with your current review of their services and funding. Here is a shortened version of my family story. My son, Elliot, is now 10 years old, my first born child. As a new mom, I was totally unaware of the appropriate milestones to watch for and always assumed my son was on target. When he started 3 year old preschool at a private school in Fort Dodge, it was brought to my attention he was not performing the same as his peers. The school suggested they bring in the AEA for an evaluation, to which I agreed. At the time, I didnt know much about the AEA or their services, but my eyes were opened very quickly, and I wished our family doctor had informed us sooner. The AEA is who caught that my son has a disability, they didnt diagnose him of course, but they brought it to my attention so I could get the help he needed. The AEA is who we were able to get local speech services from as Fort Dodge did not have a pediatric speech therapist. The AEA is who we were able to get OT services from for his many sensory, fine motor and personal skill delays while we waited on a waitlist for 6+ months to get into ChildServe in Ames (an hour away) for speech and OT. The AEA is who met with us about my sons challenging and aggressive behaviors at the time and helped us form strategies to get him to where he is now, no longer aggressive, and very few challenging behaviors. The AEA is who comforted us as a family when milestones werent being met and when the behaviors were so overwhelming that tears were shed. The AEA is who made sure we as parents remained part of the IEP team and included us in decisions being made, strategies being suggested, and gave us ideas for how to help at home. The AEA gave us all the support we needed and more. My son is now thriving in school on an IEP with minimal supports, he just graduated from speech services and previously graduated from OT. He just had the most positive IEP meeting of his school career and is becoming very independent. Had the AEA not been there to support us, we would not be in this place of growth for him as an individual and us as a family. Schools are way too short staffed to have provided this kind of specialized support. My daughter, Avelyn, is 5 years old, my second and last child. When she was diagnosed at age 2, I was much more aware of the signs and milestones and was able to involve AEA right away through the Early ACCESS program at my own request and without having to wait for a doctors referral to go through. During a pandemic when all services were impossible to obtain, we were able to get support from a speech

therapist, a teacher, and an occupational therapist for many months while we, again, waited on the Childserve (Ames) waitlist for the better part of 8 months. They gave us strategies for her communication skills, play skills, cognitive, fine motor, sensory and selfhelp skills, but they also helped us as a family and as parents by embedding these strategies into normal routines and offering us emotional support. When she turned 3 years old it was time to transition her to preschool. She is more significantly delayed than my son, so I requested she have a 1:1 paraeducator by her side for safety concerns and to support her overall learning. The school refused this request for 2.5 years, I had to call 5 IEP meetings. The AEA, however, was by our side helping us advocate for this very necessary support our daughter needed and that was recommended by her Speech pathologist, her Occupational therapist, and the ECSE Consultant. We were also glad to have a Family Educator Partner to support us greatly during this time. She had a mile long list of goals and milestones not met that requires 1:1 assistance. If she did not receive this, she would be wandering in the back of a classroom not learning anything, not working toward her independence, and would be a safety risk. Without their support and their expertise, the school would not have heard our voices. The AEA was in the classroom, working with her individually, while the school administration, who had not met our child, was telling us no. The AEA has gone above and beyond to help our family in ways I cannot put into words. Again, our schools are way too short staffed to provide this type of support, nor do teachers have the expertise to provide speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, psychology, hearing, vision, and advocacy. In our rural town, we do not have easy access to these services in an outpatient clinic. Not all families are as lucky as mine to be able to drive an hour each way to the clinic in Ames or even a half hour to the clinic in Humboldt, who is full. My daughter needs much more intensive assistance at school than my son needed and she would not thrive without the support of the AEA. We as a family would not thrive without the support of the AEA. Why not defund the AEA? Our schools are so short on teachers, paras are taking their place. The AEA is providing the needed Substitute authorization trainings necessary for our current teacher shortage. Our schools are so short on paras, many IEPs are not being met the way they should, but they are able to receive the services AEA is providing. The AEA is providing training to receive paraeducator certification. Our teachers cannot and should not be expected to provide services that require the expertise of a specialized therapist, psychologist or otherwise. They would have to do that if the AEA was not available. Our teachers are dealing with more and more behaviors in the classroom than ever, the AEA has the expertise and staff to support this. Our kids have a RIGHT to a Free and APPROPRIATE Public Education; Appropriate is not just that they are in the classroom, but that they are in the classroom learning things appropriate to their development and capabilities. Many of our general education teachers do not have a special education background or the capacity to provide all those services without the support of the AEA. Our young children 3 and under need to have access to services when they are: oNot yet diagnosed oNot yet on a HCBS waiver (we sat on a waitlist for 5 years and have yet to receive one for our daughter) oDo not have access to clinical services oAre not old enough to start school oAre in any way delayed and need assistance Our kids deserve to be successful and have a chance at independence, which can be possible through support of the AEA services. The AEA is providing free hearing screenings to families who need them and it is a necessary component of screening for autism and other disabilities. The AEA provides new learning for teachers. The AEA provides support for the visually impaired, again not all teachers have expertise on this. The AEA provides care coordination for NICU families. The Family Educator partner through the AEA helps families and schools communicate and work together as a team. The AEA helps provide support for transition age children. The AEA provides Social work and Psychology supports which is necessary for our mental health crisis. The AEA is providing many resources for schools and families to include books, coaching, assessments, and special education evaluations. Education for kids with special needs and challenges is just as important as their typically developing peers. Cutting the AEA would only be a disservice to these children. This letter is not intended to discount the support our schools provide. I

believe our schools are doing the best they can with what they have, or at least that is the case in my experience. If we take away their support, we will see more and more kids falling through the cracks and more teachers leave the field, which we cannot afford. The bottom line, our children and schools cannot and will not thrive without the support of the AEA. I hope you will consider all these facts, my family story and many other family voices who are concerned and disheartened by this possible decision.

Name: Larry Reynolds

Comment: This is not a good bill or idea. Please do not pass this legislation.

Name: Elizabeth O'Neill-Rich

Comment: HSB 542, as it is proposed, eliminates the support media, professional development and mental health. In my 25 years as an AEA School Psychologist and as the daughter of a (now retired) AEA administrator I have had the unique position to observe how AEAs help all schools and students with curriculum, instruction, and professional development for nearly 40 years. I have observed the importance of children with disabilities who are helped by the special education personnel who have successfully made Iowa one of the lowest in the country for special education complaints. Area Education agencies established 50 years ago are among the most admired systems in the country serving rural and urban districts equitably so that all students may receive the services and professional guidance that they need, and that all teachers may receive the services that they desperately need. The communities and teachers stand with the AEA system; recently a grass roots movement, to generate a t-shirt to support AEAs, began in rural southeast Iowa. That t-shirt company indicates that there post has reached 70,000 people and that 850 individual orders were made as of yesterday with the total number of supporting shirts and bulk orders well exceeding the number of orders. The people of Iowa know that rural districts will likely see the greatest impact from this proposal due to the challenges of finding and utilizing staff. The progression of this bill needs to slow down, communication needs to occur between the AEAs and districts regarding potential changes to the AEA. There need to be conversations and collaboration involving people who truly understand what AEAs do and how they work with students, school districts, and staff.

Name: Thomas Carver

Comment: I am writing to express strong opposition to the part of HSB 542 that would reduce the good work done by the state's Area Education Agencies. I currently live in a metro area and I previously lived in small town and rural northwest Iowa. In both situations, the AEA's provide services to school districts that directly impact the quality of education for students. To place the burden on each school district to find their own resources assumes those resources are available which may not be the case, especially in the rural areas. Shifting the costs for those services to the local school district loses the benefit of the economy of scale of many districts working together. I urge you to reject HSB 542.

Name: Dana Hartwigsen

Comment: My name is Dana Hartwigsen and I am a pediatrician in Ames, Iowa. I am writing to you to ask that you please do not allow the HSB 542 to pass. I wholeheartedly agree that our teachers need more compensation. But the AEA provides invaluable resources for children in the state of Iowa, especially for those who are unable to seek services elsewhere. I believe it would be a HUGE mistake to allow this bill to pass. And the children of Iowa would suffer the devastating consequences.

Name: Tayte Askelsen

Comment: As a Christian Conservative, I appreciate Governor Reynolds' efforts to promote school choice, recognizing the importance of a competitive educational environment. However, I express concern about the potential negative impact of HSB 542 on

Iowa's AEA system. In my experience as a graduate of a rural Iowa high school, the AEA services played a crucial role in fostering my love for science and providing a solid foundation for my advanced STEM degree. I acknowledge the need for fiscal responsibility but worry that disbanding the Iowa AEA system may lead to a "lowest bidder" mentality in selecting service providers, ultimately harming the students the AEAs support. Furthermore, as an employee of an Iowa business, I am aware of the delicate balance between competition and maintaining the integrity of institutions focused on the public good, such as education. My opposition to HSB 542 is not only rooted in my conservative values but also in the potential adverse impact it could have on my wife, who serves as a speech pathologist within the AEA system. I kindly urge you to vote against HSB 542, as actions like this may discourage young professionals, like myself, from pursuing opportunities within the state of Iowa, impacting the future of our community. Additionally, I would like to express my strong support for initiatives that aim to raise teacher salaries. As someone who harbors an interest in teaching, I have personally faced the challenge of reconciling this passion with the financial constraints associated with the current salary structure. Elevating teacher salaries is not only a matter of fairness but also a crucial step in attracting and retaining dedicated educators who play a fundamental role in shaping the future of Iowa's students. I believe that prioritizing competitive compensation for teachers is essential for the overall improvement of our education system and the wellbeing of those committed to the noble profession of teaching.

Name: Kim Engelstad

Comment: My name is Kim Engelstad and I am a school psychologist at the Mississippi Bend Area Education Agency (MBAEA). At the end of the school year, I will be celebrating my 10th year at the MBAEA. My current assignment is in one of the neediest buildings in the district that I serve. I am also a resident of Davenport, IA. For the past 8 years as a school psychologist, I have been actively involved in systems work to address socialemotional behavior needs. I participate as a member of the Building Student Achievement Team which creates systemwide improvements necessary for all students to grow academically and socially/emotionally. Through my training as a school psychologist, my knowledge of positive behavioral intervention and supports has been valuable for the team. I also provide students with social/emotional behavior support through mindfulness lessons and social skills groups. In addition, I coach teachers and provide them with resources for social emotional learning and behavior interventions. Without the ability for me to share my knowledge of socialemotional behavioral health with the students and staff I serve, students may not be able to achieve fullest academic potential. Research would suggest that students need to feel physically and emotionally safe before the parts of the brain that allow for learning are activated. The support the district has received from general education services including school improvement consultants, literacy consultants, math consultants, and wellbeing support facilitators has been instrumental in moving the district (and buildings) forward. Their ability to coach administrators and teaching staff in best practices is one the most important services that MBAEA offers. As all special education students are general education students first, they are able to provide general education teachers with strategies to help students with disabilities be successful. Without support from general education consultants, districts may struggle with developing effective systems to increase student performance and close the achievement gap between general education students and special education students. For smaller districts, this is a resource that they may not be able to afford. I have also trained districts across the MBAEA in Building Strong Brains (a state approved trauma informed care curriculum for educators). This training provides educators with knowledge on the impact of trauma on the brain, types of trauma, resilience/protective factors, practical strategies to support students who have experienced trauma, and teacher selfcare. In addition, I have had a variety of professional development opportunities provided by the MBAEA including the Science of Reading provided by the literacy consultants/Dyslexia specialists and Mental Health First Aid provided by the

Wellbeing Team. The professional development provided by the MBAEA to districts is vital for educators to improve their pedagogy. Without access to high quality professional development, many districts would not have access to these (and many other) trainings that are necessary for teachers to learn about best practices. In addition, I would like to add that I am on the Crisis Response Team for the MBAEA. In the event that a school needs support from mental health professionals (i.e. death of a student or staff member), this team would be called for assistance. There were over 100 Heartland AEA staff to support the Perry Community after the senseless act of gun violence on last week. Without this service, schools (especially in smaller/rural districts) may not have the enough trained staff to provide counseling services to staff and students who need it. Without the AEA system's ability to provide the full range of services that have been available, districts will be losing a great deal of support that they have previously depended on.

Name: Jenni Cloos

Comment: I am a parent of two small children with both speech and reading difficulties, I don't know what we would do without the support of the AEA. Not only were our teachers the ones to point out that my kids needed extra assistance in certain area's, they have even more resources at their fingertips to be able to help bridge the gap that is there with my kids because of the AEA. If they did not have AEA resources, my husband and myself would be at a loss as to where to turn to help bring our kids to the standard that the state has set for them. If the state has set a standard for our kids to meet, the state needs to do everything in its power to give the teachers the resources needed to help those students meet those standards, even those that need extra assistance. Without the help of the AEA, many students will not meet the standards set forth by the state and what then? Who will be left to help them bridge that gap? A parent that may not be as equipped as a teacher? My husband and I are both college educated and professionals in our fields but neither of us are equipped enough to help TEACH our children what is needed to bring them up to the standards set by the state. That is what our teachers are there for and are in desperate need of the AEA assistance. Please do everything in your power to keep the AEA around for the teachers and the students, the future of our state!

Name: Sarah Corbin

Comment: Please vote no to this bill. As someone who has multiple family members working within the school system both as teachers and additional resources for students (SLPs), I have seen how the resources provided by the AEA help them provide a better experience for Iowa students. These resources are even more valuable given the asks of our educators continue to increase without increased pay.

Name: Gina Iverson

Comment: I have devoted 38 years to Iowa children, first as a general education teacher, then a special education teacher, and currently as an AEA special education consultant. I depended on the specialized skills of AEA practitioners and the services that were provided when I was teaching, and now I have school staff who rely on me and my colleagues to provide support and services to them and their students. To eliminate the expertise and the resources that AEAs provide to the children of Iowa would be detrimental and a disservice, especially if done without a thorough review that includes input from those directly affected by this proposed bill. Our teachers work very hard, and have more than earned a pay raise, but a salary increase shouldn't be linked to this bill and shouldn't be dependent on our schools losing the AEA supports that have been provided to them, supports that they count on, and supports that are well respected by parents, students, and school staff.

Name: Marissa Berryman

Comment: Hello, I am writing to express my opposition to HSB 542. As a SpeechLanguage Pathologist who has spent ten years supporting various districts across the MBAEA service area I have seen first hand the impact that AEAs make across all districts,

especially rural schools. I think that we all agree that our teachers who work incredibly hard every day deserve the increased salary that is discussed in the bill, however the damage that will be done to our teacher and students support systems would be crippling if this bill is passed. AEA employees work to support both general education and special education students. The AEA supports school interventions, teacher trainings, connections to educational resources/media, and much more. The majority of my career has also been spent supporting the student/family transition from Early Access to school based services. The fact that Early Access is not mentioned or will continue to be supported as a part of this bill is horrifying. Our families deserve to know that the quality support and education that they depend on will continue to be provided. The idea that our districts and families will not see funding cuts is a blatant lie based on the services/supports being removed based on this bill with no plan for districts to provide them. This bill is harmful to districts and families. I urge you to not allow this bill to move forward for the sake of the students and teachers who rely on the supports provided by ALL who are working diligently for AEAs.

Name: Steve Bearden

Comment: Please vote no on HSB 542. I have been in education for over 30 years. I cannot understate how important the area education agencies are to the success of my students. There is no possible way I could do my job effectively without the support of the area education agencies. By eliminating 3/4 of these agency services, we will be doing a detriment to our students in the State of Iowa. If we have struggled to maintain standardized test scores in recent years due to the changing population in our state, eliminating the AEA would further hinder our ability to stem this trend. I encourage you to vote no on HSB542. Thank you for listening to the citizens of Iowa.

Name: Ann Craig

Comment: All Iowa students deserve confident and efficacious teachers. This is something that develops over time with experience and success. Strong mentoring programs help ensure beginning educators have the support needed to develop confidence and selfefficacy. HSB542 will eliminate Grant Wood AEA and Mississippi Bend AEA Mentoring Programs. Over the last 10 years, these programs have supported and helped to develop confidence and selfefficacy in over 2000 teachers. After teaching for five years, 69% of Iowa beginning educators are retained as compared to 82% and 88% of beginning teachers served by the Grant Wood and Mississippi Bend AEA mentoring programs. Almost 400 more teachers who currently serve all our Iowa students. Please vote no to HSB542 and protect the students who deserve confident, efficacious teachers who deserve the highest quality mentoring programs from our AEAs.

Name: Jennifer Snook-Hall

Comment: AEAs provide valuable resources to schools, students and families, especially to rural areas. Please take time to listen to constituents and consider all the negative impacts reducing services from AEAs would have on Iowa's neediest students. Thank you

Name: Amy Thiessen

Comment: My name is Amy Thiessen and I am a lifelong Iowa resident. I raise my two children in Davenport with my husband Nick (also of Davenport). My family has benefitted from services through the AEA as my son Duncan has dyslexia and was evaluated and received various supports through the inschool programs they provide. We had a school shooting in Perry Iowa 2 weeks ago and we arent discussing making schools saferwe are yet again discussing removing SERVICES FROM CHILDREN AND FAMILIES who need help. This simple fact shows everything wrong with our current governor and what she actually holds dearand its not the people of Iowa. Its her, using us for an agenda we are getting less and less say in. While she comes up

with horrific programs like her recent ESA rollout nothing more than a crafty way to take money from public schools and gut programs while test scores plummet. Its time our elected official SHOW UP FOR US and oppose House Study Bill 542 and start doing what is right. Its time we hold them accountable and hold them to a higher standard of character than what we are seeing through their actions. When someone shows you who they are, believe them. Thank you.

Name: Sevond Cole

Comment: Even with some of the special education supports staying in place, disbanding the other parts of the AEA would be a disaster. I have worked in many districts throughout my career and my most valuable learning as an educator has been in collaboration with the AEA. Principals are not experts in all areas of education. We rely on the expertise of the AEA in order to collaborate, especially when we are asking for big changes in our programming. This year alone, I have used the AEA to help support our PBIS program, our new Tier 2 Check in Check out system, our new Social Academic Intervention Groups, Cognitive Coaching training, Mandatory Reporting training, Chapter 102 Training, our and ESSA check ins. Teachers also use there vast online resources, daily, for supplemental resources to support the onl also plan to take a deep dive into our special education curriculum and will need to use literacy experts at the AEA who are familiar with intervention curriculum to help guide us to improve our special education scores. These were all ways that the AEA has helped us just this year alone. Without an established alternative to support our educational system, we will fall to one of the lowest in the nation. I am a proud Iowan can't stand to see this happen. I'm not sure why state administration is trying to make it hard for people to be educators in Iowa. Teacher pay would be nice but not if it means losing the AEA. Scratch the whole bill if it takes away the AEA. Sevond Cole Principal, Fellows Elementary Ames Community School District

Name: Laurel Klitgaard

Comment: Please dont cut the funding to the AEA. It has historically been a great asset and your plans will negatively affect the kids, parents, teachers, and communities in our state. Please help Iowa by not advancing HSB542.

Name: John Gambs

Comment: It appears the proposed legislation will create a bureaucracy in Des Moines to run the state AEAs. That makes no sense to me.

Name: Amy McGovern

Comment: I am writing to oppose this legislation. I am a strong proponent of AEAs and their services. At a time when special education in Iowa is in crisis, it is ridiculous to propose reducing services for our students with greater need(s). I am a special education teacher who would not have been able to continue in my career without the help of local AEAs in my first years teaching. They helped with every step of the IEP process and provided support, data collection, materials, and insight no other professionals in my schools could provide. The simple fact is that public schools and their employees do not know enough about special education to run schools legally or sufficiently without AEA guidance. At a te when teachers with no special education certification are being employed to teach special education due to shortages, the AEA's role is even more vital to maintaining equitable and legal education for students with disabilities. They are the experts in their field and cannot be replaced by a nonexistent pool of people to replace them in th schools.

Name: Katherine Horn

Comment: My oldest daughter Maria is 23. She was born with Spina Bifida and uses a wheelchair. She came here when she was 11 from Bulgaria and had never been in a traditional school. In fact the people in Bulgaria could not fathom how in the e world she would ever be able to attend public school in any way at all. Thanks to social

media they were able to see her not only attend school, but participate in sports, go to dances, graduate from high school, get her associates degree and now start to work. In middle school and high school she worked with several track coaches (many who had special education backgrounds) while part of the track team. These coaches from Ottumwa did a great job of providing an inclusive environment for Maria and ensuring that she felt like she was part of the team. She was always included and cheered on even when competing in races by herself at meets. I would frequently get questions about why Maria would have to race by herself. There are many reasons for this, but ultimately it came down to we do not judge and compare able bodied and disabled athletes in the same way. She was always competing against her own times and against a set of times that were considered national standards (similar to educational standards). Maria has even attended the state track meet twice and would have a third time had Covid not prevented it from occurring her senior year. Maria has her associates degree from IHCC. She has been working since October at Pickwick as an associate in one of the preschool classrooms and loves it. She, like many her age, is still figuring out what she wants to do long term, but this has been a great first job for her. My younger daughter, Ella, also received OT services on an IEP for two years due to her CP. she currently is served on a 504 plan to ensure that she is able to receive all the accommodations that she needs to be successful at school. The current bill regarding the AEA that is being proposed greatly concerns me. The impact it will have not only on my child who is still in school and other children who need these supports. I know the common answer is special education will not go away, but in truth it will change and there is no clear way how it will change.

Name: Lea Crouse

Comment: To whom it may concern, Last year I had a lot of students start to become very interested in different nonfiction texts. We used a lot of resources from my own classroom library and our school library but then we started to use the AEA library. This helped with a variety of leveled nonfiction texts. Without this, it would have taken multiple trips outside of our classroom to find books in our own library. The AEA has kits that you can borrow from their stock of books. It is very beneficial to have their help b

Name: Chad Fritz

Comment: I encourage you to vote NO to HSB 542. While I agree an increase in teacher pay is necessary, I do not support the changes proposed to the AEA. This would be a set back for Iowas students, teachers and communities.

Name: Brent Hoelsing

Comment: I would like to express my opposition to the AEA portion of this bill. While not against change, elimination of the AEA, specifically the NONSPECIAL EDUCATION services that benefit and impact ALL students is not acceptable. Flexibility for the districts is needed, but not at the expense of completely eliminating services, which is what will happen with the current bill in place. All funding not related to Special Education is set to be eliminated with this bill, leaving many, many districts, specifically rural districts and their teachers and students without needed educational supports. Please go back to the drawing board and figure out how to create a winwin for all involved (evolution without the loss of services).

Name: Julie Williams

Comment: As an Iowan, taxpayer, and parent, I strongly oppose HSB 542. Taking away services affects all students, gen ed and special ed. AEA's provide so much support to our schools, there is no way those services will be replicated with the funding that is being offered. And once these supports go away, there is no way this system can come back. Schools, teachers, families, and students work hard in education, lets work to support them rather than take away.

Name: sarah mcnew

Comment: Please vote no on this bill. While I support increasing teacher pay, I don't at the expense of students and the AEA. This bill aims to privatize education even further and make resources for rural Iowa even more difficult to retain. Please vote against this.

Name: Nikki Guill

Comment: I am writing to express my opposition of this bill. Rural communities rely on the AEAs services. The governor has already taken away PUBLIC funding from PUBLIC schools which directly impacts rural communities. Our kids deserve better.

Name: Jess Krob

Comment: I would like to express my absolute opposition to HSB 542. It does not have the best interest of students at heart. AEAs are a necessity to schools and to think that it can be gutted to its bare bones and services removed that support all students would be a mistake. It is contradictory to tout giving choice to schools when you are taking away resources and services they use daily. I TRULY hope all the legislators representing their constituents are listening to what their people really want.

Name: Christine Blum

Comment: I have been on the Board for Green Hills AEA for 4 years. I have heard firsthand the impact that the AEA has on our education system. The employees offer so many valuable services to children who need assistance to succeed. I am very concerned about the proposed legislature. I would like to see the Chief Administrators have a voice in proposed changes to the system rather than extensive cuts to the organization. I oppose HSB 542. Please let the AEA system continue to help students, teachers, families and schools to succeed as they are needed now more than ever.

Name: Dave Padderud

Comment: I am a retired special education teacher who taught at Britt/West Hancock High School for 32 years. During my time in the classroom, I received a variety of services from Northern Trails AEA 2, which eventually consolidated to AEA 267, and is now Central Rivers AEA. Some of the supports from the AEA included: professional development providing me valuable training on curriculum, assessment, and specific instructional supports. In addition, media services which gave me access to materials and curriculum; and guidance as well as support from special education consultants on serving individual students through their IEPs (Individualized Educational Plans). House Study Bill 542 is calling for a substantial reduction in what AEAs provide, when AEAs have provided so much to us all in schools across Iowa. I agree it is important to oversee all educational programs that serve our state, but this particular proposal seems RADICAL in its current format. I implore you to support fully our states AEAs, as they are structured now, and to please strongly consider how impactful their services have been to so many students, families, and educators as they are operating currently. I am not in favor of House Study Bill 542. Thank you.

Name: Jennifer Danker

Comment: I'm imploring you to vote no to this bill. While raising teacher pay is a needed aspect for our state, that can be separated from this bill. Dismantling the AEA would hurt our entire state. Our AEA is consistently reviewed positively, look at the past accreditation visits, this bill has no merit. Please consider who is trying to push through this bill and be honest about the real reason they want to dismantle yet another service that helps public education and other public social services. All of the attacks against our once stellar education system has to be stopped. Please show your willingness to vote AGAINST a bill that is vastly opposed by the citizens of Iowa. Do the right thing.

Name: Abigail Keibler

Comment: I strongly urge you to vote no to HSB542. As the many comments Ive scrolled through today demonstrate, Iowa needs to continue to support our AEA system. The supports provided by such an equitable and far reaching AEA system benefit ALL students general education, special education, public students, private students, home school students, and ALL children 021. Our AEA system is admired by other states, our educational litigation is low, and our Iowa students deserve the best. Support our aeas and vote no to HSB542.

Name: Mary Grotzky

Comment: I would like to express my opposition to HSB 542. I am a teacher in a small, rural school district. As a special education teacher, I see the many ways that our AEA provides assistance and services to all of our students. All students are general education students first, and we need these services to help ALL students succeed.

Name: Patricia Fuller

Comment: As an educator in Iowa for the past 32 years,I am writing to you now in regard to the sweeping changes the governor is proposing for Iowas area education agencies. There are several things I would ask you to consider before choosing to support her proposal.1)Impact of services: Iowas area education agencies provide a plethora of services that support what happens in Iowas classrooms on a daily basis. Most concerning to me is the very long list of educational services that will be cut. Literacy, numeracy, youth mental health first aid are just a few of the items on that list that I have experienced personally. I have gained knowledge and information from each of these that I was able to take back to the classroom and use to impact student learning. Where will these supports come from, under the governors proposal?2)Access to services: Under the governors proposal, districts will access special education services in one of four ways: provide the services themselves, partner with other districts, stay with the current AEA, use a neighboring AEA, or contract services through a private company. This approach is chaotic, to say the least, particularly for rural districts who are separated by significant distances. Of those options, the contracting of services to private companies is the most concerning. Who is overseeing such companies to ensure quality services provided by people who have actually been trained in the discipline they are providing services for? These companies could come from out of state, thus directing taxpayer dollars out of Iowa. 3)How government works: Based on the information currently available, the governor is operating as if all of this is a forgone conclusion. I have seen the job postings on the states website, which tells me she fully anticipates this to occur. So where does that leave you, as a voting member of the Iowa legislature? If the governor can propose an action and move forward with it, without a vote being cast, that demonstrates a complete disregard for the protocol that is followed in passing legislation. If this is how we operate in Iowa, that makes the function of all Iowa legislators superfluous. There was a time when educators in Iowa were respected, and their voices taken into account. We need to return to that approach, as well as follow the legislative process, instead rather covertly push legislation through without robust debate. If the governor and the legislature do not follow legislative protocol, they are clearly acting in their own interests, rather than the interests of those they are there to serve.

Name: Dan Elliott

Comment: Iowa students, families, and school districts need the AEA's. There are so many services that are provided, besides just special education services, that are critical to students' health and wellbeing. Please, do not vote to cut funding for our AEA's. Iowans need the AEA's.

Name: Kahri Plein

Comment: I am opposed to HSB546, which will dismantle our Area Education Agencies and

negatively affect Iowa's children. I will address four talking points which were emailed to me by one of our legislators.1.) Too big You may already know, based on numbers from the 2022-23 school year, Iowa has 328 public school districts which serve 511,327 public school students (stats from the Department of Ed website). Our AEAs serve all 328 public school districts, 511,327 public school students, AND all of those public school teachers who teach at those schools, AND, the private schools and private school students in our state (which I didn't see information for when I looked), AND all Iowa children birth to school age, AND their families! This is a huge undertaking and honestly they are spread far too thin as it is. Did you know that there are AEA employees who serve in every school building? While the Department of Ed has oversight of these districts, teachers, and students, they are not in our buildings doing the groundwork. I have taught for 16 years and have seen a Department of Education employee in one of the buildings I've taught in exactly one time. They were doing a site visit which they no longer do. The only other time I have worked with and seen an employee of the department was actually at our local AEA where they brought her in to assist with training they provided. When you see the lists of services provided and the numbers served, it makes complete sense that the AEA employs many staff members. I would argue that they are too small and I have seen their budget cuts cause them to cover a larger area with less staff, especially in recent years. There is no comparison between their staff size and the staff of the Department of Education; logically they should be bigger.2.) Too expensive I think all of the points made above illustrate why even a 529 million dollar budget makes sense for a system that does so much for our state. Please remember that AEA services are for all from birth to age 21, whether not yet in school, in public school, private school, homeschool, for ALL. Last legislative session the voucher bill was signed with an estimated cost of 345 million dollars annually. That money is going to a much smaller percent than the 100% who benefit from AEA services. With a budget surplus, and proposals such as spending five million dollars on new charter schools, which again will only benefit a tiny portion of our state's children, how can you say 529 million is too much for the entire population of Iowa's children from birth to age 21?3.) Too distracted First of all, to say that the AEA should only be providing services that qualify as special education is insulting. I teach Talented and Gifted, providing those services to students who are identified as needing them. The Great Prairie AEA Talented and Gifted consultant was a lifeline when I began in this field in a rural district. I also have two children who benefit from these services in their schools. Budget cuts at the AEA resulted in some AEAs having to assign the Talented and Gifted consultant role to a consultant who had multiple other duties and may or may not have had the training previously required. This has already caused a disparity in services across the state and to suggest that this be cut entirely is to say that you don't care about an entire population of Iowa's children. That is unacceptable. Additionally, the other percentage of services being labeled as a "distraction," are actually services that very much benefit special education students. The Early ACCESS services are the beginning of special education services. I know many families who have benefitted from these services and those children will now enter school much more prepared than if they had had to wait to receive their special education services when they arrived at preschool. Early intervention is evidence-based practice and taking it away will set children back. All of the other AEA services that benefit core instruction are vital to these students as well. It has been proven that quality core instruction is key to students making gains and this includes special education students, many of whom spend a majority of their day in the general education classroom. Citing our need for improvement and success with special education students as a reason to cut their services makes zero sense and is immoral.4.) More money is not the answer This puzzles me a bit as an argument here because it's not all or nothing. There is actually an option where you could keep all of the services in place and keep the same budget. In fact, I think most constituents and even AEA employees would be open to an evaluation of their services and if some changes are necessary, they may even be welcomed. Additionally, each AEA was already reviewed by the State Board and Department of Education, per Iowa Code, in 2022. I was able to access those accreditation reports for 8 of our 9 AEAs and all

8 met every standard and received a recommendation for reaccreditation which could last up to five years. There has been oversight and analysis and it should be used and part of the narrative. Taking the time to do a thoughtful analysis would benefit all and would also give the AEA and school districts time to plan for any changes. Did you know that planning for next school year is already occurring? The AEA is helping families plan to transition their special needs children to preschool next school year or to plan for summer services, or modify IEPs. This bill is a surprise attack on those children and families who will be left with uncertainty when they need stability. Again, this is unacceptable. If more money is not the answer for AEAs why is it the answer for vouchers and charter schools?

Name: Jennifer Dillon

Comment: I write today to oppose HSB542 to cut AEAs. As someone supporting rural schools of Iowa, I have seen just how much the AEA does. The AEA is often thought of for special education services, but there are so many resources the AEA provides to Iowa schools that support kids with their education. In many cases, kids may not need ongoing special education services. However, they do need knowledgeable teachers to support their skill development. Teachers come to the AEA to increase their knowledge and be able to give their students what they need. The AEA has provided professional development support for teachers (e.g., Preschool Specially Designed Instruction cohorts, LETRS training) that help kids in real time and don't require special education services. The AEA has focused on keeping kids first and foremost as general education students so they can keep learning in real time with real peers. The AEA also provides physical and technology-based materials that teachers use in their classrooms each week. Without these materials, teachers would have to purchase even more learning materials for their classrooms than they already do. This bill will make it even more impossible for rural teachers to stay in education from a financial perspective. Overall, I worry that this legislation will hurt rural Iowa more than urban parts of the state. Small districts simply do not have the means to purchase all of the services AEAs provide. This means districts will have to choose only some of the supports likely SLP, OT, and PT services which again means that students of Iowa (especially those in rural areas) will get less from their general education. I know the Governor thinks private contracting is the way to go, but this will deplete school budgets even faster. It also diminishes the cohesion of services as private service providers will only be looking to accomplish their service and not focused on working collaboratively to address the needs of the whole child. This bill, hastily written and even more hastily implemented by the proposed April 30, will have devastating effects on the children of Iowa and their educational opportunities. Please oppose this bill and support sustainable educational practices through the AEA for all the children of Iowa. If the AEA system needs to change, please do it in collaboration with those professionals and make changes responsibly over a period of time to minimize the impact on students. Students deserve the best we can offer them, and the AEAs are highly tuned to giving every support to schools to ensure the highest quality of education.

Name: Brad Jermeland

Comment: I am writing to you today to ask you to oppose HSB 542. Since the inception of AEAs in the 1970s, they have existed to provide fair, equal, cost-effective services across the state in the areas of special education, education services, and media/technology. The AEAs' resources support all Iowa students, not just those in special education. AEAs have supported school districts that I have worked in as a teacher, principal, AEA administrator, associate superintendent and superintendent! AEA personnel supported me in my classroom, buildings and districts by providing professional learning opportunities, staff development, media and technology support, and IEP support and services to families and students. I am concerned that if AEAs are dismantled as HSB 542 calls for, the abovementioned services will not be there for rural and urban school districts, teachers and support staff, and most importantly students. I hope you will join me in opposing this legislation in its current

form. The governor promised a study and evaluation of the AEA system, but HSB 542 removes the possibility for any improvement because it eliminates large segments of the system entirely. This bill needs full public transparency and engagement from parents, teachers, administrators, and others that will be directly impacted. I believe there's a better way to improve outcomes for Iowa's students. I would welcome an opportunity to meet with you to continue this conversation to provide you more detail regarding the importance of AEAs for schools, parents and students! Thank you for your service to Iowa. Sincerely, Brad Jermeland Retired Educator

Name: Karmen Weddle

Comment: I would like to express my strong opposition to the portion of HSB 542 that eliminates AEA services. As an Iowan, parent of three public educated graduates and a tax payer, this bill guts so many services that your constituents rely on. For school districts to replicate the services provided by AEAs would be costly if even possible. I support raising teacher pay, but to do so in the same bill that you decimate services that are critical to our ability to do our jobs is abhorrent. This part of the bill should be pulled out and considered on separately. The citizens of Iowa are asking this to be stopped immediately. Please listen.

Name: Melissa Gutshall

Comment: Please do not pass HSB 542. I am pleading with you as an educator and a Republican. The AEA is an essential component of our education system. One that educators use daily for so many reasons resources and trainings our school systems can not supply for one. But more importantly than getting books and materials into students hands (as if that wouldn't be beneficial on its own) is the work they do directly for our children. They provide excellent services to help children succeed, that as an educator I am not qualified for or if I happen to be do not have the time to spend with said child due to the time restraints and testing expectations the State has already put on educators. I can't be a marine teacher without the support of our AEAs. Please do vote NO. Please help educators and the children of Iowa instead of making things harder and for us to fall further down in the educational rankings. Melissa Gutshall

Name: Sharon Carr

Comment: I have grave concerns with the Governor's bill, HSB 542. This bill proposes to eliminate a lot of the IMPORTANT but not wellknown services provided by the Area Education Agencies (AEAs) in Iowa. I worked at Johnston Community School District for 28 years and am aware of the many services provided. Heartland AEA helped us figure out that our daughter was dyslexic, back in 1977, before it was even a wellknown disorder. Now she's a school teacher in southern Iowa with a Masters Degree!! My brother, born in 1934, unfortunately didn't receive this type of service (there was no AEA), so he was illiterate and it truly ruined his life. Kim Reynolds has expressed concerns that AEAs have changed the way they do things compared to 50 years ago. And she's right, they have because it's a different world today. Students now have to learn to use computers, they must learn AI and other technologies, mental illness is at an alltime high, they have to deal with school shootings, etc. We didn't even have computers 50 years ago! And, as our world has changed, AEAs services have also changed and grown to keep up with student needs. Did you know with the recent tragedy at Perry High School, Heartland AEAs school psychologists and school social workers stepped into action and rushed to Perry to provide emergency mental health services to assist students with posttraumatic stress. This bill would cut that service as well. Please use your influence to slow down the progress of HSB 542. This would give everyone the chance to really think about how it might affect Iowa's school districts as a whole. If the proposal keeps moving ahead without the careful consideration it needs, please vote against House Study Bill 542.

Name: Josef Sigris

Comment: I have been a teacher for 20 years and have seen the tremendous benefits the AEA has provided our schools. From special education services, to technology assistance, to mental health supports, and countless other ways, the AEA is like a reliable sibling to the school. Schools cannot afford to lose these supports with no plan of replacement services. I see my wife work tirelessly each day so that schools have the necessary resources and supports to be most successful. How about funding to help them? The starting salary for teachers sounds nice on the surface, but what about veteran teachers? Teachers after 12 years in the profession? Lets lean on professionals in the schools and AEAs to help with this legislation. They know what schools need most.

Name: Jessica Kreutzfeldt

Comment: Please listen to our voices! There is a serious teacher shortage, and actions like removing the support of AEA will not help this crisis. I am a teacher, and the most common complaint I hear is when people make decisions about our job without truly knowing the devastating implications they will have. Teachers need all the support they can get please listen to us and dont remove a valuable support. In the end, its the students who suffer.

Name: Tyler Niska

Comment: I support AEA and stand against this terrible bill.

Name: Jacob Hudson

Comment: To Whom it may concern, I am in opposition to HB 542. My wife works for the AEA. Her and her colleagues spend countless hours of both work and personal time advocating for the rights and needs of all children. The AEA is an extremely valuable asset to all the communities they serve and the state as a whole. Leveraging their jobs against one time raise for teachers (equally important to our community) is a poor tactic to make this bill look positive for education. All communities, and kids will suffer if this bill is passed and AEA services are removed.

Name: Deborah Burnight

Comment: Please vote no on this bill, as it will hurt students, families and ultimately Iowa communities who rely on a welleducated, healthy workforce to survive in our competitive landscape. Small rural communities cannot afford to hire the kind of technical assistance that AEAs presently provide. This bill will crush public education in Iowa, which has already fallen from 3rd in the nation to 24th in the last few years. Do your job and support Iowa students and teachers.

Name: Sarah DeWolf

Comment: I oppose HSB 542. While I support an increase in teacher pay, this bill would also eliminate valuable resources for teachers and students, particularly in rural areas. Changes may be needed, but these drastic and sudden cuts to Area Education Agencies are not the way to go. Conversations with rural schools should be held to determine what help is actually needed.

Name: Kate Peterson

Comment: To whom it may concern, I am voicing my strong opposition to the passing of HSB 542 and the impact it has on our AEAs. I am both a paraeducator and a mom of a child with special needs. In 2010, I was a young single mom, concerned about the development of her child at 3 months old, and when I looked to the world for help, the AEA EARLYAccess program was there and AEA has continued to support my family since. In the special needs community, we have to advocate tirelessly for the support our students receive. Now we are questioning how will services be disrupted while schools scramble to implement this bill? All students that need extra support, can receive support from our AEAs, and should be able to continue receiving support. I 100% support the increase of teacher pay, but this should be a separate

matter from what this bill is discussing. My question is, why is increased teacher pay being included in this bill? Where is the funding coming from? The special education fund? I strongly urge everyone to slow down with this bill and look to the community's input on how this will directly impact all students and staff that currently receive AEA support.

Name: Darcie Whitlow

Comment: Please reconsider this legislation. Please consider the impact that taking away AEA services will have on all stakeholders. Do what is right for the children of Iowa.

Name: Jordan Lunzman

Comment: Hello, Please oppose the bill HSB 542. Not only do I work for the AEA, but I have seen the AEA provide so many services for my family, my friends, and myself when I was younger. When I was in kindergarten and first grade, I received help for vision from the AEA to help in my classroom and with my class work. I also had consultants work with my teachers and myself on writing. This experience helped shape my life and push me to have a dream job of helping others. Which I now do. I get to go to work with kids everyday and help them become their best selves too. I have meetings weekly with multiple AEA staff such as vision and hearing specialists, literacy consultants, early access, OTs, PTs, SLPs, and many others. I rely on consultants and my supervisors to help guide me through tough cases and I greatly appreciate the media center and everyone involved for allowing us such great resources to help our children. I also remember my sister calling me to tell me her newborn, my niece, would be born with a cleft lip and palate. We were scared, but I reassured her that our early access team is amazing and can provide all of the resources for my niece to thrive and she has thanks for these resources. If this bill passes, that all goes away and our children, the future of America, gets punished. Please reconsider and say NO to this bill!

Name: Jordan Lunzman

Comment: Hello, Please oppose the bill HSB 542. Not only do I work for the AEA, but I have seen the AEA provide so many services for my family, my friends, and myself when I was younger. When I was in kindergarten and first grade, I received help for vision from the AEA to help in my classroom and with my class work. I also had consultants work with my teachers and myself on writing. This experience helped shape my life and push me to have a dream job of helping others. Which I now do. I get to go to work with kids everyday and help them become their best selves too. I have meetings weekly with multiple AEA staff such as vision and hearing specialists, literacy consultants, early access, OTs, PTs, SLPs, and many others. I rely on consultants and my supervisors to help guide me through tough cases and I greatly appreciate the media center and everyone involved for allowing us such great resources to help our children. I also remember my sister calling me to tell me her newborn, my niece, would be born with a cleft lip and palate. We were scared, but I reassured her that our early access team is amazing and can provide all of the resources for my niece to thrive and she has thanks for these resources. If this bill passes, that all goes away and our children, the future of America, gets punished. Please reconsider and say NO to this bill!

Name: Kimberly Payne

Comment: I strongly urge you to reconsider this bill. The Iowa AEA systems have existed to provide fair, equal, and cost effective services across the state. The AEA resources support all Iowa students, educators, and parents. The AEA has been crucial in helping school districts (big and small). Our job as educators is to try and close the educational gap, this is something we rely on our AEA to help us try to achieve. The AEA plays a very important role in school districts in this state, please vote NO to keep the AEA in place for the benefit of the educational system in Iowa.

Meleah Jones

Name:

Comment:

I am writing to express my concerns with this bill. AEAs are a vital resource to administrators, teachers, and students in Iowa, especially those in small schools. As a teacher and instructional coach at a small school, we utilize AEAs to provide close support and professional learning to teachers. Without the support of our AEA, we would be unable to do so much of the work that we are currently doing. Please keep our AEAs as they are; they are a crucial component of the success of Iowa schools.

Name:

Caitlin Gruis

Comment:

I oppose this bill. As a mom of three students in a small, rural, public school in Iowa. It would be beyond devastating to lose the services that the AEA provides.

Name:

Sarah Cooper

Comment:

I would like to express my opposition to House Study Bill 542. As a nurse and community member, I have seen the benefits from the services provided by the AEA. From birth to age 21 they provide support and resources that are vital to so many children, students, families, and teachers. Early access, physical therapy, speech therapy, occupational therapy, audiology support, media services, special education and gifted services, training tools, and mental health support are just a few of the areas in which the dedicated AEA employees ensure that every child, family, and teacher in this state has the resources and support they need to succeed. Every child deserves that. Taking away those services, or dismantling the AEA system, would be a huge disservice to all. The passion, expertise, skill, compassion, and dedication that AEA employees demonstrate is commendable, and I'm afraid of what might happen if you turn to private forprofit companies like this bill proposes. I personally know that the AEA consultants who work with infants and young children with special needs develop a bond with the families they work with, and the support they provide is incredibly vital to ensuring the child not only grows but thrives. Also, the increase in teachers' salaries is long overdue, but taking away the support they receive from AEAs could have the consequence of teachers deciding to leave this state. And we already have a shortage of teachers. I am asking you to oppose this bill as it is written. Please do your part as our elected officials to listen to your constituents' stories and concerns and please provide truthful, accurate answers to the many questions that so far have been unanswered. The governor has already taken away public funding and taxpayer dollars from our public schools, despite the majority of Iowans disagreeing with her decision. Do not let her take away even more. Please oppose House Study Bill 542 as it is written. Thank you.

Name:

Amy Bautista

Comment:

Dear Iowa State Representatives and State Senators, I am reaching out to you today in regard to the governor's proposal to reduce the states AEA system. I honestly, feel this bill has not been thought through. Without the AEA assisting our schools in areas outside of special education, who will the state hire or pay to aid in professional development in districts that are identified as (Targeted or Comprehensive) based on the ISASP tests? If that burden is left to the district many would not be able to afford assistance or better, yet, it would be left to the blind leading the blind. Is this what Iowas future of education is going to look like? Iowa used to be looked up to by many other states. Now, we have fallen into mediocracy. It will fall even further if we cut the AEA support that is needed for our schools. In addition, the AEA provides several services we utilize to keep our doors open based on all the state requirements. School Librarian, School IT support, etc. just to name a few. The AEA has helped us meet the state's requirements at a reasonable cost. Private intensities are not ready to support school districts or offer services that districts will be able to afford. This will drastically affect several of our rural school districts. It may even cause us to close. The AEA has done an excellent job supporting the everadapting and improving statewide its system. We rely heavily on the AEA to support our schools in these ways! Iowa schools are critically reliant on Iowas Area Education

Agencies (AEAs), rural schools in particular. AEA staff and programs serve as monitors for Department of Education requirements, consultants for academic programs, suppliers of curricular materials as well as Professional Development programs, and provide technology support for school districts across the state. Most importantly, the AEAs provide direct support to special needs students, in disciplines that the vast majority of school districts are unable to provide, in positions such as Speech and Language Pathologists, Occupational and Physical Therapists, Audiology Specialists, and more. Students with Individualized Education Programs require specific and unique services provided by or overseen by AEA staff. The AEAs also provide many needed services for schools, just to name a few: emergency support when a district loses a superintendent or school business official midyear, virtual learning content, printing of materials at affordable fees, training when districts undertake new instructional math or literacy initiatives, crisis/emergency supports and mental health services, among many others. Data/Evidence: In many instances, if it weren't for the AEAs, rural schools would not be able to find or afford specialists to meet student needs or assist staff with the curriculum and materials necessary for student learning. The economies of scale of the AEAs provide savings that schools would not otherwise be able to achieve. CONSIDERATIONS: The Legislature should work closely with schools and AEAs in updating expectations and changing the funding or structure of AEA services, to fully understand the impact on students and schools before any changes are made that will negatively impact services for children that may be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to replace. RESOURCES: Advocate for AEAs website Hanover Customer Satisfaction 2023 Results AEA programs and services document will provide you with bullet points on Iowa's AEAs including quick key facts and a summary of the many ways Iowa's AEAs support our schools. ***Many of these would not exist if the bill is passed as is. Sincerely, Amy Kies Bautista PK12 Principal, South Page CSD

Name: Kelly Gerhardt

Comment: I am very much opposed to HSB 542 and how it will effect Iowas AEAs and the students and teachers in Iowa. My children had the benefit of using the AEA Talented and Gifted Resources and benefitted greatly from these resources. One of my children was so upset and bored in school that she asked me to home school her, without the help of the AEA, she would not have enjoyed staying in school with her friends. I have also been a paraeducator in Lewis Central and saw first hand how the Media resources checked out by teachers for use in their classrooms benefitted ALL students including the special education students in the general education classroom. The resources provided by the AEA Media department were at different reading/comprehension levels so the Special Ed students could learn right along with everyone else about the same topic and they were able to feel truly engaged with their peers. These resources are invaluable to students and classroom teachers!! In my role as a Para, I also witnessed first hand the wonderful and necessary job the Speech Therapists from the AEA with the students I worked with. The on site AEA psychologist was so very helpful to me also when working with hard to reach students! She gave me suggestions and ideas, met with me to check and see how these supports were working and to see how these students were doing. Invaluable!! The teachers, students and parents need all of the support we are currently getting from the AEA!! If this bill is passed as is it will hurt ALL students and schools in Iowa and devastate the small rural schools! The AEA already has media resources available to all schools and districts, why would we even consider not letting them continue to use these resources? Every service offered by the AEAs is available to all schools and students, the services are shared to keep the cost down so all schools will benefit, why would we consider taking these valuable and needed resources away from schools and children? Please lets make choices for the benefit of Iowas children!!!

Name: Kyle Vockrodt

Comment: Please vote NO on HSB 542. This bill is removing valuable resources the AEA currently offers to students and teachers. Allowing this bill will remove the local volunteer review boards and remove access to learning and development aids currently shared across the state.

Name: Ann Meiners

Comment: I am in support for better teacher wages. I am not in support of the proposed changes to the AEA. Their support to teaching staff and students is invaluable and this would have an enormous negative effect on both.

Name: Claire Hall

Comment: I am opposed to HSB 542 because I am twentyfive year licensed teacher from both public and private school sector who has used the excellent professional AEA services each year for curriculum support in math and science, for classroom training, for early childhood literacy, for social work supports for families struggling in addition to speech and behavioral issues. The AEA staff is such a needed resource. Please focus your attention elsewhere, give Iowa schools all the support they need from the Iowa AEA.

Name: Kari Christenson

Comment: Dear Legislators, Im writing to express my deep opposition to HSB 542. I have been working in the field of special education for over 20 years and have gone through many changes. Through all those years, the AEA has been a source of expertise and support for students, families, educators and school districts. Dismantling the AEA system would have a substantially negative impact on the educational services provided in Iowa. This bill endangers the future of Iowa students. Yes, Im all for teacher pay increases, but not at the expense of student services. Students and families and schools need AEAs, please oppose this bill.

Name: Audree Redinbaugh

Comment: To Whom it May Concern, I am writing to you in regards to the proposed House Study Bill 542 which proposes reductions of AEAs in Iowa. As your constituent, taxpayer, parent, educator and Iowan who is passionate about our public schools and the future of our state, I am writing to express my concern with HSB 542. I would like to start with a personal story about my experience with the AEA. Two years ago, we lost one of our second grade teachers unexpectedly. He was a strong member of our community, and an advocate for all of his students. He had been at our school for almost 30 years, so to say this was a blow to our district is an understatement. Our AEA took us under their wings and came to support us the following day. They were there to help anyone who needed mental health support to deal with the loss, and to also talk to students, particularly his beloved second graders who had just lost their teacher that they loved dearly. They were there for us if we needed a break, or couldnt stay strong in front of our students. They spend the whole week with us, checking in, and providing support where they were needed. Three months later we lost one of our students who was in our level 3(significant disabilities) program. He was near and dear to our hearts, and it was just another blow to our district as whole. We were broken, it took everything in me to come to school each day knowing we had lost so much that year. All the members of our AEA were on campus for us once again to deal with the loss of a beloved thirteen year old student who everyone knew and loved. With that being said, limiting AEAs to exclusively special education services eliminates AEA involvement in crisis response. Local crisis response is necessary when schools experience crises, such as the school shooting in Perry on January 4th of this year, and much like what we unfortunately had to go through two years ago. As a parent, my daughter was able to be screened by AEA staff during preschool child find to make sure she received early access services, if needed. In addition, AEAs provide federally mandated services for smaller districts like ours at extremely reduced (and often no) costs. For example, all of her teachers have been trained by AEA staff on upto date research on how students learn how to read using

the nationally known LETRS training in which AEA staff are certified to teach. Through that training they were taught the importance of teaching students how to read through professional development courses of study that focus on not just reading but spelling, and language tools. In conclusion, Without AEAs, our district would not be able to afford the services needed to meet federal regulations which may cause smaller districts to shut down and send kids an hour or more away to school each day. Smaller districts like ours will be impacted the most, as they benefit the most from free supplementary services that will no longer be covered if the AEAs are exclusive to special education and if their pool of special ed money goes exclusively to contracting out special education professionals. Special education professionals are necessary but not sufficient for access to a free and appropriate public education. I respectfully request you to take these concerns into consideration. Thank you for your time. Sincerely, Audree Redinbaugh

Name: Julie Honan

Comment: It is imperative that you oppose HSB 542. My daughter, a junior at Underwood HS, was nominated to be a part of HOPE squad last year. Hope Squad is a peertopeer suicide prevention program. Hope Squad members are nominated by their classmates as trustworthy peers and trained by advisors. The program reduces the risk of youth suicide through education, training, and peer intervention. This program was started 3 school psychologist employed by GHAEA. As we are learning from the tragedy in Perry, Iowa, mental health PREVENTION is so very important. In fact, AEA staff from the Crisis Prevention Team were in Perry, Iowa for students, staff, and community members. I am extremely concerned that if this bill should pass, we will no longer have the AEA to help with mental health prevention and the caring team after tragedy strikes. Vote NO on this bill.

Name: RODNEY SHEETS

Comment: The AEA is important to our children and rural communities. If we eliminate the AEA program, how will rural schools afford the experience and resources that are already in place. Currently the money to fund AEA will not change, it will just be allocated to the schools. The schools will then have to hire their own group of counselors to fill the void. The current tax funding for AEA is better utilized by hiring regional AEA departments who can hire less people to cover more schools. As represented in the recent tragedy in Perry, AEA was able to respond with their team to assist the Perry students children and staff. What I heard from live news coverage, was that Perry officials were very appreciative of the AEAs quick, knowledgeable and efficient response and support. Iowa's children need AEA. Thank you, Rodney Sheets

Name: Barb Hutchins

Comment: Whatever happened to the old saying if its not broken, dont fix it the AEA has done an exemplary job with students for years dont take this valuable resource away from our students. My children, and now grandchildren have benefited from these programs for years, I beg you, do not take this away from them.

Name: Robert Morton

Comment: To whom it may concern, The purpose of this email is to explain what AEA services have done for our son and what they continue to do for him and his peers and why it's needed to stay active. We are sure that you have been inundated with correspondents from AEA and school staffers with their opposition to cutting funding from some AEA programs. We also know that it is part of your duties to field such correspondents, to provide explanations for actions taken and to explain your individual position on the matter. We will cut to the chase, we are adamantly opposed to any cutting of funds or programs to the AEA. Our son, Noah, has been a beneficiary of AEA programs since he was just before 1. He is now 10. We can say with 100 percent certainty that without the programs that he received he would not

be nearly as far along as he is. Here is a quick backstory on Noah: He was born December 2nd, 2013. He immediately underwent surgery upon being born and spent the next 9 days in the NICU. Upon being able to come home, it became apparent to us that he was severely delayed in many areas such as intellectual, physical, and occupational. Spanning the years leading up to just before Noah was 1 (when he began receiving benefits) to when he began school (3 years of age), he received Early Intervention services at home and then in school. These have not only been beneficial but crucial to his development. Furthermore the fact that these services were able to come to our home was not only able to provide peace of mind but, more vitally, was his health given he is Immunocompromised. See we were able to control the environment in which our son was progressing in order to keep him safe. With Noah, whenever he gets sick, or has a cold, it likely means a hospital visit and stay. Due to his health condition, he requires a steroid in order to live. Without it, he would rapidly slip into adrenal crisis, then a coma, then death. Having the ability to have the services in our home meant we could control the area he was in thereby reducing the exposure to viruses and illnesses that to a typical child would mean a cough or sore throat, but to Noah, it could very easily be his demise. Since going to school, Noah has routinely received AEA services that have in no small way, have had a direct impact on his advancement. Furthermore, these services are reconstituted every year in Noah's IEP. Noah currently receives vision, speech, OT, and PT services through the AEA at school. Noah's AEA service providers talk and share information with his IEP team. This means that Noah receives services that have a continuity and flow of information and methods that best help Noah succeed. This progression has been so crucial and beneficial to Noah that he has surpassed the goals that seem unattainable years ago. But please don't be mistaken, the benefits of the services Noah receives not only benefited him in his earlier years but are also currently benefiting him. In the last two years, school staff and SLP have worked together so Noah can have a larger range in communication. They have been able to collaborate with AEA providers when needed and if there is an issue with devices to include but not limited to: dynavox, walkers and glasses. This was only made possible by AEA services he has received. We live in a rural area. If AEA is taken away, the services he needs to be able to succeed will all be taken away. Rural schools cannot afford to provide the services that AEA is able to provide to Noah and other students like him. A few years ago, Noah and his mom, Katie, even went to the capitol in Des Moines to talk about how these exact services have benefited him and kids like him to ensure these services keep being provided. Noah is just one out of thousands of children who benefit from AEA services both at their homes and at their schools. The AEA is a bridge as the AEA service providers coordinate with his teachers and outsourced providers thereby ensuring the best possible chances at success. If you were to defund programs or relocate those funds and services then please recognize this: you're telling Noah, and his family and loved ones, that someone who is in legislation believes he is not worth the cost of the services he has come to receive and appreciate. That Noah, being special needs, is not worth the time, that he is less than, that he is not good enough to receive the services he deserves. To think that it will not be communicated this way would be a gross error on your part. If you still are going to vote to reallocate the funds, then we request that you tell us in no uncertain terms, no legal jargon, just plain language where the funds that are going to be reallocated are going. If there are any services being cut, we request to be notified which ones are being cut and which ones are remaining. Thank you very much for your time and attention, The Morton Family

Name: Brett Abbotts

Comment: I have concerns in the shortterm. Being in a consortium with the teacher apprenticeship program, it seems that everyone at the Capitol had a vision and passed a bill based on that vision. However, this involved several other entities which seemed to have a different vision. It seems that none of the entities communicated and it is extremely frustrating. I just don't want that to happen again. The only ones that will suffer are our kids, and there are probably potential lawsuits in the waiting

for districts. When we have talked in the past about the AEAs, and talked about opting out, I assumed that we would get all of our flow through dollars. Since this bill eliminates media and ed services, we won't get those dollars. If the current bill passes, I have to find how to replace some of those ed services, ultimately affecting my bottom dollar. Currently, I can afford that, not many schools are in my financial position. This will be a barrier for improvement. As for media services, AEA online provides some of our mandatory trainings at no charge along with some great online learning opportunities for staff. Somehow, that site and those opportunities would need to be converted to the DE. Since the Governor's speech, many AEA staff are looking for other jobs. If a district opts in for AEA services, will there be enough staff left to serve our kids? Of the staff left, what will be the quality of their skills? Good educators are in need and will have no difficulties getting a job, those that are not so good will be the staff that is left. Again, our kids suffer and the doors will open for lawsuits. The current bill allows me to choose my AEA. Since I am equally close to Heartland and Prairie Lakes, am I guaranteed that Heartland will have to take me and will they have enough staff? This is extreme, but what if I chose Central Rivers in Cedar Falls? Is it really worth their time to drive 2 hours, oneway, to serve my kids? In the current proposed structure of fee for service, would there be a standard metric for what the fees would be or would they be a sliding scale based on your location? Ann stated that because of the complexity of the AEA portion of the bill, it would probably undergo several changes and could take time. If that is the case, I will beg you to separate the AEA and Teacher Pay into multiple bills. Unless I envision this incorrectly, schools will have to delay negotiations until that passes. Waiting until late in the session will cause an immense amount of stress on teachers which could be disastrous for schools. Again, kids suffer. I am very happy with increasing teacher pay. I wonder what it would look like if this plan was to transition over a couple years, rather than all at once. What will it look like for districts that are still under a multiyear agreement? What would do for our teachers who are going to have additional years of experience while making less than the first year teacher? If we trim media and ed services, this will lower each district's property tax. Why can't I tax locally to replace that service or some other area like management? Management pays property/liability insurance premiums and we have had increases of 25%, 25% and now 15% over the last 3 years. I will need to raise my tax rate to pay this. The other area is sharing of school improvement consultants with other districts. I already do this with ELL and our district is better because of it. The person comes from a 3A district and is an expert. A solution there is to expand operational sharing and let me generate some revenue to pay for this. I know that property tax relief is a priority for the Governor, but by privatizing the delivery of SPED services the costs of those services will increase significantly, which in turn may cause every district in the states SPED deficit to increase significantly, which will be paid for by property taxes. If property tax relief is a priority, then this bill directly contradicts that. Another concern is dissolving the AEA Boards, and putting them all under the oversight of the Department of Education, which has not proven to be a districts ally or even understand what happens in districts on a daily basis. The DEs primary role is compliance. They are not equipped to work with school districts to help them build their own capacity, and even if they were equipped with the skills to do this, they don't have the manpower to support the entire state. This is not feasible or sustainable, and will really hurt rural school districts because under the proposed changes to the Every Student Succeeds Act.

Name: Berleen Wobeter

Comment: I am a retired educator but my comments will be directed differently as there are many experts to speak on behalf of AEAs. My question concerns the treatment of hard working responsible citizens who have earned degrees and advanced degrees. It is clear that work is expected and respected in this state. Unemployment benefits were limited last year. Now we have proposals that harm people who do the right thing. Their lives are turned upside down for no clear reason as expressed by the Gov. These employees were not part of a review process and they seem not to be

respected and valued for the education and experience they have. It is a clear contradiction to our supposed values.

Name: Mckenzie Macon

Comment: I am strongly apposed to the HSB 542 bill. I know from personal experience that AEAs are necessary for providing every child an opportunity to receive the education they deserve, and they help educators be able to provide that education for every child. This bill goes against everything Iowans should stand for, this bill would be disenfranchising our children and eliminating jobs for no discernible reason. Governor Kim Reynolds claims that Iowa disabled students performing under national averages is because the AEAs are being paid for but not being used, which couldn't be further from the truth. Not only is this statistic based on standardized testing, which many educational institutions are now turning away from, but this bill only reduces resources from Iowa disabled students, meaning their scores will only drop and they will be left behind. This bill is egregious and I urge the committee to consider Iowans who are in desperate need of the services that AEAs provide.

Name: Nicole Weers

Comment: As an Iowa teacher and Iowa graduate, I am thoroughly opposed to this bill. It may sound good on the surface, but it takes away critical resources from so many of our students. Growing up and going to school in Iowa, as well as being the daughter of an Iowa school employee, I saw how crucial the help of the AEA was to my own education. They provided incredible resources to help give me a fantastic education that propelled me to further success as a college student and now teacher. As an English teacher at TriCenter High School in Neola, Iowa, I know the AEA has an even greater impact on students than I ever realized when I was a student in school myself. The AEA provides vital resources to ALL students not only special education students. I cannot imagine my classroom or any other Iowa classroom being able to provide the quality education my students deserve or the quality of education I came to expect as a student myself. As a teacher, I have been on staff when several students have died in accidents or fellow teachers died from accidents or disease. The AEA provides counseling that is imperative to helping students and staff heal from these traumatic events. As we have horribly recently witnessed here in our state, we are not immune to even greater tragedies like school violence. The students and staff at Perry deserve counseling as do any students in Iowa touched by violence and trauma. The AEA is the only organization that provides these counseling services in our area. Practically, as an English language arts teacher, I also count on resources such as book sets provided by the AEA to teach my students. As the mom of students with sensory processing disorder, I know the value of occupational therapy provided by the AEA. As a proud Iowan, I want people from out of states especially people who may be considering making Iowa their home to see our education system and be impressed by what we have to offer. Stripping away all that the AEA provides minus special education dollars would decimate schools, devastate students, and destroy the legacy of stellar education for which our state has been known. Please, for the love of Iowa, Iowa teachers, Iowa students, and the hope of Iowa's future, do NOT pass this bill.

Name: Kristine Oswald

Comment: As a parent of a child who needed AEA services, this bill is not good legislation. Who is going to fill that need? Rural schools will not be able to afford these services! Please do not get rid of the AEA's as we know them!

Name: Tara Davis

Comment: I am writing to let everyone know of my concerns for HSB542. I am for raising teacher pay so that they are finally appreciated for all their hardwork. However, I do not support the proposed actions towards Iowa's AEA'S. As a team rep for Central Rivers AEA I have had so many teachers, parents, and administrators tell me the impact that our ability to work together as had on student growth. I feel that the

same collaboration for all student growth will not be as readily accessible in rural districts in this law passes as it is written.

Name: Stephanie Nelson

Comment: I would argue that teachers are our most vital asset in society. Their work is at the very foundation of the "next" generation and our society. Yet, they are grossly underpaid! It is imperative that we society recognize their work, their importance and that this be equally reflected in their salary/benefits! It is also equally important to maintain and sustain the AEA! AEA's are vital to coming along side the underprivileged and those with special needs. Investing NOW in our children portends the likelihood of an adult who is a societal asset.

Name: Nicole Kitchen

Comment: To Whom It May Concern: I have taught 33 years and have seen firsthand the positive impact our AEAs have on staff, children and their families! I don't understand how Gov. Reynolds can say she supports education when she proposes a bill that will hurt SO many! I wish she could sit in on weekly collaboration with our AEA staff as they work tirelessly to provide support to their many schools, its staff, and families! I implore you to reflect on what you've learned and reconsider moving forward with this bill. It will have disastrous impact on children and families for years to come. I welcome any legislator to take the opportunity to reach out to us directly to learn more about the integral role AEAs play in providing services and support to our children. Sincerely, Nicole Kitchen

Name: Amanda Bonjour

Comment: Dear Legislator, I am Amanda Bonjour, and I live in Reinbeck, IA in Grundy County. My husband and I have both been educators in Iowa for 13 years. I am a mother to three wonderful children who attend Iowa public schools, and I am writing to you today to ask you to oppose HSB 542 for not only the sake of all students and educators in Iowa, but our state as a whole. The AEAs support so many facets to the children and students across our state, from birth through age 21, not solely special education, but hundreds of additional opportunities and resources. As a librarian, I've utilized their media services and data bases to teach my students how to become critical researchers. As a school leader, the AEA offers a vast array of learning opportunities that we would not otherwise be able to send our staff to in order to grow as teachers. As a parent, my own children have benefited from participating in extensions such as battle of the books and I am looking forward to the career training they could receive in the future. I could go on and on, but the fact of the matter is we rely on our AEA so far outside the scope of Special Education; yes, this is a crucial aspect, but there is much more to what they do for our state as a whole. Please consider how this will impact our entire state. This will have long term ripple effects, and the divide its creating already is palpable. This is not the future we wish for our children. Please consider this when you oppose HSB 542. This truly can not be what is best for our state.

Name: Kelli Robinson

Comment: I ask that you please vote no for this bill. Our rural schools and their students greatly benefit from the services provided by Iowas AEA. I speak from first hand experience as my daughter has worked with AEA and their amazing staff to help encourage and aid her growth. This bill does not put the children that benefit from these resources and services first.

Name: Alexis Steward

Comment: Hello, My name is Alexis Steward and I am writing to you in opposition of the recommendations that have come from governor Reynolds cutting AEA resources. My son was diagnosed with autism at the age of 3. He entered public school preschool at the age of 4 and has utilized AEA services ever since. He is now 9 and is in the 3rd grade. I can say with utter confidence that had we not had those services

he wouldn't be where he is today. He is in the general education classroom a majority of the time and has made special connections with his peers with the help of the AEA services. They not only work with Wyatt but also work with the other students in the classroom to help them understand how to communicate with Wyatt and interact. Had he not had that help from the beginning he would likely be in a special education classroom in isolation hating school. School is one of the things that he looks forward to the most, not only because of his interactions with his peers but also the interaction and communication with multiple members of the AEA organization. I am extremely fortunate to have a job that has incredible insurance so I am able to take him to private therapy as well. His private therapist works in conjunction with the AEA therapist so Wyatt is getting the most out of his day in and out of school. There are children that don't have that luxury and school might be their only opportunity for intervention. I hope that people can realize the detriment that this would put on the kids attending public schools. Thank you for your time, Alexis Steward

Name: Teri Voyna

Comment: My wife and I are both 4th generation Iowans, raised in Iowa schools, and have received advanced degrees from Iowa universities. When our son, Leo, was born we were proud to raise him in Iowa. When he was diagnosed as autistic, we were lost. The AEA was the first organization to offer services to Leo. Free of charge. No matter how much we made or didn't make. The AEA put an AAC device in my son's hand when he didn't have a voice of his own. They opened up an entire world to him. When everyone told me he would never talk, the AEA never gave up. Now, when I sit and listen to him tell me stories, my thanks and love goes directly to the AEA. The AEA provides services to Leo and every child in Iowa who qualifies. They have been an educational loadbearer in this state for as long as I can remember. The \$5 million dollars in cuts to AEA funding by Kim Reynolds takes those services right out of the hands of children who need them most. These cuts will hurt the poor and disabled more than anyone. These cuts will hurt educators and schools at a time when public education is already under attack. Most importantly to me, these cuts hurt my family. We want to stay in Iowa because of the education our son receives and because it's our home. Kim Reynolds has made it clear that there isn't room in Iowa for families and sons like mine. T. Voyna Bettendorf, IA

Name: Amanda Sanderman

Comment: I am writing to ask that you oppose HSB542 in its current form. Losing the media and educational services portions of the AEA system will make it incredibly difficult for schools to offer the resources their students deserve and the professional learning their teachers desire. AEA hosted student events, resources such as microscopes, digital planetariums, science resource kits, and countless more items are vital to our schools. Schools are not able to afford these materials, or cannot justify their purchases for shorter term units and by utilizing them through the AEA system, this ultimately is more responsible than each school system considering purchasing on their own. If this bill passes, teachers will lose access to content experts in math, science, ELA, as well as talented/gifted programming. These experts currently are able to answer questions, provide guidance, coach and model for classroom teachers as well as consult with principals and superintendents. As a student, I was served by my AEA in the area of speech. As one of two students in the small district with a speech impediment (and not in special education, so no IEP), I would not have received the support I needed to overcome this challenge without my AEA. As the bill currently stands, I would not likely have been able to receive this support as I did not qualify for special education on the contrary, I was in the gifted program. Please consider what is best for EACH Iowa student and teacher and allow the AEA system to retain educational services as well as media resources in addition to special education.

Name: Samantha Wilson

Comment: I am writing to you to express my sincere concern for Iowas teachers, students, and families regarding HSB 542. I am a parent of 3 children who attend public school. My younger two are in the middle of their junior year at FremontMills JuniorSenior High School in Tabor, Iowa and my oldest is in his first year at Iowa Western Community College. While none of my children have received special education services, they and the rest of the students at FremontMills, have benefited greatly from the supports and services provided by Green Hills AEA. Digital Learning Consultants brought STEM activities such as coding and robotics. Classroom teachers checked out book sets for reading classes to have access to a broad variety of books. My younger son received a consultation from an Occupational Therapist to support handwriting needs. My daughters title one reading teacher consulted an AEA Reading Consultant for support and expertise in implementing her reading intervention. For the past 2 years, FremontMills has utilized technology supports from GHAEA. They no longer hire their own IT staff, they rely on the expertise of their purchased services to provide seamless, robust, IT services that they could not otherwise financially provide on their own. FremontMills Elementary is currently in year 3 of specific literacy training in LETRS (a comprehensive professional learning designed to provide early childhood and elementary educators with deep knowledge to be literacy and language experts in the science of reading) delivered by trained GHAEA Literacy Consultants. None of these services would be provided under the guidelines set forth in HSB 542. The first message I heard from Governor Reynolds was that AEAs were in need of a comprehensive review. I would welcome this review if it were truly to help us find ways to serve our students, teachers, and families better. However, it does not seem that HSB 542 is a review it is more of a dismantling. Small districts, even if they are allowed to spend their special education dollars that previously went to AEAs as they direct, would not be able to fund the numerous positions that serve districts in the current format. Media, digital learning, curriculum support, schoolwide positive behavior supports, school improvement support, data and assessment support, and crisis support. none of this (and much, much more) falls specifically under special education and would be the responsibility of school district. This bill is simply not in the best interests of Iowas students, teachers, or families.

Name: Katie Danielson

Comment: As an educator, AEA has provided support in the area of academics, behavior, social emotional learning, and speech. I could not provide the amount of support my students need without them. It is a disservice to take away their access to these value resources.

Name: Katie Morton

Comment: To whom it may concern, The purpose of this comment is to explain what AEA services have done for our son and what they continue to do for him and his peers and why it's needed to stay active. We are sure that you have been inundated with correspondents from AEA and school staffers with their opposition to cutting funding from some AEA programs. We also know that it is part of your duties to field such correspondents, to provide explanations for actions taken and to explain your individual position on the matter. We will cut to the chase, we are adamantly opposed to any cutting of funds or programs to the AEA. Our son, Noah, has been a beneficiary of AEA programs since he was just before 1. He is now 10. We can say with 100 percent certainty that without the programs that he received he would not be nearly as far along as he is. Here is a quick backstory on Noah: He was born December 2nd, 2013. He immediately underwent surgery upon being born and spent the next 9 days in the NICU. Upon being able to come home, it became apparent to us that he was severely delayed in many areas such as intellectual, physical, and occupational. Spanning the years leading up to just before Noah was 1 (when he began receiving benefits) to when he began school (3 years of age), he received Early Intervention services at home and then in school. These have not only been beneficial but crucial to his development. Furthermore the fact that these services

were able to come to our home was not only able to provide peace of mind but, more vitally, was his health given he is Immunocompromised. See we were able to control the environment in which our son was progressing in order to keep him safe. With Noah, whenever he gets sick, or has a cold, it likely means a hospital visit and stay. Due to his health condition, he requires a steroid in order to live. Without it, he would rapidly slip into adrenal crisis, then a coma, then death. Having the ability to have the services in our home meant we could control the area he was in thereby reducing the exposure to viruses and illnesses that to a typical child would mean a cough or sore throat, but to Noah, it could very easily be his demise. Since going to school, Noah has routinely received AEA services that have in no small way, have had a direct impact on his advancement. Furthermore, these services are reconstituted every year in Noah's IEP. Noah currently receives vision, speech, OT, and PT services through the AEA at school. Noah's AEA service providers talk and share information with his IEP team. This means that Noah receives services that have a continuity and flow of information and methods that best help Noah succeed. This progression has been so crucial and beneficial to Noah that he has surpassed the goals that seem unattainable years ago. But please don't be mistaken, the benefits of the services Noah receives not only benefited him in his earlier years but are also currently benefiting him. In the last two years, school staff and SLP have worked together so Noah can have a larger range in communication. They have been able to collaborate with AEA providers when needed and if there is an issue with devices to include but not limited to: dynavox, walkers and glasses. This was only made possible by AEA services he has received. We live in a rural area. If AEA is taken away, the services he needs to be able to succeed will all be taken away. Rural schools cannot afford to provide the services that AEA is able to provide to Noah and other students like him. A few years ago, Noah and his mom, Katie, even went to the capitol in Des Moines to talk about how these exact services have benefited him and kids like him to ensure these services keep being provided. Noah is just one out of thousands of children who benefit from AEA services both at their homes and at their schools. The AEA is a bridge as the AEA service providers coordinate with his teachers and outsourced providers thereby ensuring the best possible chances at success. If you were to defund programs or relocate those funds and services then please recognize this: you're telling Noah, and his family and loved ones, that someone who is in legislation believes he is not worth the cost of the services he has come to receive and appreciate. That Noah, being special needs, is not worth the time, that he is less than, that he is not good enough to receive the services he deserves. To think that it will not be communicated this way would be a gross error on your part. If you still are going to vote to reallocate the funds, then we request that you tell us in no uncertain terms, no legal jargon, just plain language where the funds that are going to be reallocated are going. If there are any services being cut, we request to be notified which ones are being cut and which ones are remaining. Thank you very much for your time and attention, The Morton Family

Name: John Dawson

Comment: Dear Assembly, I am writing to you today as a concerned member of the Republican Party to express my deep disappointment with the current direction of our party, particularly in relation to the proposal to eliminate positions within the AEA (Area Education Agency). As a grandparent who has custody of my grandson, who is on the autism spectrum and relies on an Individualized Education Program (IEP) at school, I cannot overstate the critical role that the AEA has played in our lives. Before the AEA became involved, my grandson struggled in school and seemed to be a child who simply "didn't want to listen." However, with the dedicated support and guidance of the AEA, particularly with his IEP and their active participation in meetings with his school, my grandson has made remarkable progress. He is now in 9th grade and has achieved a place on the honor roll, a milestone that would have been unimaginable without the invaluable assistance of the AEA. The proposal to eliminate AEA positions and redirect resources back to schools ill-equipped to handle the needs of students like my grandson is deeply troubling. It is essential to recognize

that students with unique learning requirements, such as those with special needs, depend on the specialized support and expertise that the AEA provides. Without this assistance, many students risk being left behind, just as my grandson was before we sought help from our AEA consultant. Furthermore, I am deeply concerned about the impact of these changes on smaller districts like AP, which may struggle to locate and fund the necessary resources and supports for all students and teachers in the regular classroom, including media resources and professional development. It is imperative that we consider the broader implications of these decisions, particularly for districts that may already be facing resource challenges. As a Republican, I am profoundly disappointed by the direction our party is taking with HSB 542. It is my sincere hope that we can reconsider this course of action and work towards solutions that support all students and educators, regardless of their individual needs or the size of their school district. Sincerely, John Dawson

Name: Anthony Martin

Comment: I strongly oppose HSB 542. While I agree that we should increase the pay for educators, the proposed changes to the AEA would be a disservice to the schools, teachers, families, and students in this state. They depend on the services, support, and resources that are provided by the AEA and by stripping these we are severely damaging our education system. Focus needs to be on what is best for the students of this state.

Name: Christine Jensen

Comment: Please do not pass HSB542. We live in rural Iowa. We count on the AEA to support our local school districts. Taking away services would be very harmful. We farm and obviously pay taxes to support our public schools. The AEA services cannot be replaced by an individual district. Please, for the sake of our children, do not pass HSB 542. Thank you.

Name: Tammy Place

Comment: I oppose HSB 542 in its current form. This bill does NOT reform the AEA system, rather it ELIMINATES critical services. My teaching career began in 1980, so I can personally attest to the many services the AEA has provided for me over the years. I have taken several professional development courses, learned so much from both literacy and math improvement consultants, technology services, media services, and have received support through instructional coaching networks the AEA created. I have taught several students with IEP's, who benefited from the knowledgeable consultants who came into the schools, working with me, in addition to the Sped teacher. If Governor Reynolds truly desires to study and reform the AEA system, this process should include parents, teachers, school administrators, school board members, and legislators. All of these groups are needed in order to make decisions that will affect so many in our state. Even more important is listening to folks from the rural districts and communities; losing these services will be a deathblow. Thank you for reading my heartfelt comments!

Name: Robert Bassler

Comment: Hello! My name is Robert Bassler and I am 68 years old. This is the first time in my life that I have been moved to write to my representative for help so I hope you understand how important this issue is to me. I am writing to you to ask you to please vote no to this bill! I grew up in a family of 12. One of my younger brothers, Dave, had a terrible stutter as a child. He attended a small rural school in Iowa where he received Speech and Language services provided by the local AEA. Because of this, I know firsthand what a huge impact those services had on his life. Learning to overcome his speech impediment changed his life! It is my understanding that Governor Reynolds plans to close all the AEAs in the state. I implore you to please vote against this legislation! Our children need and deserve the chance to continue to receive these services. Our very own grandson had speech issues as a toddler. He was referred to our local AEA who immediately sent a SLP to his home evaluate

him. The SLP tested him and, thankfully, determined that he did not need ongoing services but instead provided our son and his wife with vocal exercises they could do with him to help improve his speech. The guidance provided by this SLP was life changing for my grandson and I am thankful to report that he speaks normally today because of it. In our case, we were lucky because our grandson didn't have a serious speech impediment but thousands of students do! The AEA provides the structure that enables those children to get services that will help them for the rest of their lives! Please don't take that away! We all know that, if left up to the individual schools especially the rural schools who are struggling financially these services will be greatly reduced and the children will be the helpless victims whose lives will suffer! But you have the ability to save our AEAs and thus allow our children (our future) to continue to receive these life changing and essential services/resources. I implore you to take a stand on this issue and help the children in our state get the help they so desperately need and deserve. I am counting on you to do the right thing and vote against closing IOWA AEAs! As you know, SLP services are just one branch of services provided by AEAs. There are so many other important services these agencies provide to our state! If you would like to speak to me personally about this, please feel free to call me at 5633206112 or email me at rjcbazzyahoo.com. Thank you for your serious consideration of this important request! Sincerely, Robert Bassler 1741 Deer Run Drive Burlington, IA 52601(563) 3206112

Name: Elisa Huff

Comment: Please do not support this bill. I am an independent and in general have supported the governor. This bill does not have evidence behind it nor has the reason for this bill been transparent. I heard the governor mention complaints about AEAs yet no specifics have been provided. This seems to be a bill based on limited government, which I generally favor, versus on evidence. I don't see any evidence being provided that documents any negatives regarding the AEA organization. I do see countless number of families contacting their representatives documenting the positives of the AEA organization. There is no evidence being provided that says AEAs are not a positive to schools, students and families. This is not a bill that you should support.

Name: Tim Sulzner

Comment: Iowa Elected Officials, I have seen first hand the effects and results of the AEA. As a father of three children with one having learning difficulties. The AEA impacts were life changing for her and her future success. As I researched and communicated with parents, administrators and teachers, it became more apparent the reach and quality of these AEAs. We all have friends and family in education and understanding the criticality to the greater good of our children, the community and future ready Iowa. There's no agency or institution that can fill this gap that will be created and at cost to the students. We cannot cut AEAs and or the services they provide.

Name: Amanda Holmes

Comment: I am a parent whose family relies on the services provided by Iowa's Area Education Agencies (AEAs). I am deeply concerned about House Study Bill 542. Recognizing that AEAs are not just for students with special needs is essential. From the beginning, AEAs were designed to support all children, including those in general education. This inclusive approach reflects a commitment to the whole child, acknowledging that many students, not only those in special education, benefit from these services. AEAs in Iowa have always worked closely with educators and families to ensure successful outcomes for students. I believe this collaboration is a cornerstone of our education system, focusing on student equity and addressing the unique needs of each child. We have seen it firsthand with my son. He was diagnosed with autism at a young age. As you can imagine, this news was overwhelming for us, but the support and resources provided by the AEA have been invaluable. Miles is nonverbal, yet, with the dedicated help of AEA's specialists, he is beginning to speak. The progress he has made is nothing short of miraculous, and

it would not have been possible without his village of support, which prominently includes the AEA. The proposed changes in House Study Bill 542 could disrupt this well-established system. Any dialogue around changes to the AEA system must include a wide range of voices including educators, parents, and local and state stakeholders. This ensures that the system continues to meet the needs of districts and children across every county in Iowa. Our children's education and future depend on a system that recognizes and supports the diverse needs of all students. As a parent with children who benefits from AEA services, I urge a thoughtful and inclusive approach to any proposed changes.

Name: Kelsi Messer

Comment: I am writing as a concerned citizen asking that HSB 542 be opposed. Area Education Associations are crucial to the wellbeing of our state. My son has utilized the AEA for vision, hearing, Early Access, and now through a formalized IEP plan and while I understand the special education components of the AEA will stand, but the other valuable aspects of the AEA will be dismantled. This will force school districts with already dwindling budgets to use their resources to provide additional services to their students when the AEA has already been set up to provide fair, equitable and affordable services to schools. From a financial standpoint, the AEA's leadership compensation is regionally comparable to school district administration compensation. They must meet the 5% threshold under Iowa code and they DO. When looking at all 9 AEAs across the state, they were all below this 5% threshold. After the shooting in Perry, the AEA were the boots on the ground providing crisis response to the district. Why is this necessary service being cut? I write as the wife of an educator, who uses the services the AEA provides on a daily basis. Teachers are leaving the profession in record numbers and while yes, an increase in pay for teachers is great, a decrease in the supports teachers have access to is incredibly harmful. The AEA provides media supports, and assistance with educational instruction in a variety of subjects. They provide specialists to districts. Centralizing and dismantling these services will only hurt our schools. I ask that you all pause, and seriously consider and evaluate this bill. I ask that you actually speak with teachers and school districts about the incredible value of the AEA. I ask that Republicans stop dismantling the services that are so valuable in our state and stop attacking the schools that were once so great. Thank you for your time.

Name: Rochelle Richards

Comment: I am writing you to vote no to HSB 542. I am in favor of increasing teacher pay! Teachers are asked to do more each year. With the rise of mental health issues, teachers need more resources, not less! I am, however, against the dismantling of the AEAs. I live in a rural community, and the AEA's services to the school district are essential to continue improving all students' education. Without the AEAs, my school district will take a massive hit in the resources they rely on. Please take a stand for all students and schools in the state and vote no.

Name: Allison Emery

Comment: I applaud the portions of HSB 542 seeking to increase teacher salaries in an effort to attract and retain the best and brightest to the profession of teaching. I oppose portions of the bill that seek to eliminate AEA services to Iowa schools and students, and I strongly encourage our elected officials to carefully study and investigate the impacts this would have on their constituents and the education system in our state. Separating these two parts of the bill would allow immediate action to increase teacher pay, while doing due diligence in regard to critical educational services provided to all Iowa students and educators.

Name: Hannah Reade

Comment: I am among countless other educators in the state of Iowa, who cannot imagine where our school systems would be without the ongoing and intense support the

local AEAs provides. Although I agree with the governor in the need to restructure AEAs, cutting general education supports poses a major threat to our schoolaged children. Our job as educators is to treat every student as though they are a general education student first. It is our job to prevent the future label of special education student from occurring and to intervene and provide the support the child needs to reach success. Removing general education supports is removing preventative supports. This leads Iowa to a state of reactivity in our educational system. We must proactively provide general and special education support for our local districts to provide exemplary supports and compliance for our students. House Study bill 542 poses such a threat, that I cannot refrain from writing in today. Instead of cutting general education services I move to assess the overall systems and structures of AEAs. I too believe the structure has not been assessed in far too long and there are many system flaws to be addressed. Lets start there, districts can hardly staff their buildings, let alone staff crucial supports they will need without access to the AEA general education supports. This is a loss of valuable education to our students, staff and families. I cannot express enough the importance that lies within the AEAs general education supports. I encourage you all to hear us, ask us questions, go and see for yourself the work the AEAs do for not only special education students, but general education students and families as well.

Name: Kristin Morales

Comment: I am writing today to strongly oppose HSB 542. Please listen to the numerous parents, educators, and AEA staff who are strongly opposed to this bill. As a speech pathologist who has been employed with an AEA, school district, and private clinic, I cannot speak highly of the quality of services the AEA provides, collaboration among AEA colleagues and districts, their dedication to professional professional development, and wanting whats in the best interest of the child. Please help to continue to provide equitable services among ALL students in Iowa!

Name: Bree Bartlett

Comment: To whom it may concern, I want to let you know I am opposed to HSB 542. Public schools/all children, not just those identified as special ed.currently have free access to all services of our local AEAs. If this bill is passed the state of Iowa will being doing a huge dusty all children. Test scores will not improve as teachers will not have access to technology, professional development, online trainings, and social emotional support/trainings. Not to mention all the support staff such as consultants, school psychologists, speech pathologists and many many more. Teachers are already stretched to the max. The community of Perry is a prime example of how the AEA has supported not just the school and students but the community in the area of SEL. Please vote against HSB 542Sincerely Bree Bartlett Iowa Public School teacher Iowa community school district educatedIowa college educated

Name: Blake Panno

Comment: HSB 542 as it is written does nothing but take services away from ALL Iowa students. While the raise for teacher starting salary is admirable, this should not be tied to a bill that further reduces funds and services for public education in the state of Iowa. The AEAs were created to provide equitable services across the statethis bill does nothing to address the concerns rhetoric Gov outlined as reasons for the change. Who does this bill truly serve? What problem is it solving? Where are the flow through funds that districts WILL NOT receive going? Why was 1million dollars of tax payer money sent out of state for this bill to be written? There's needs to be honest and open debate of all issues, with input from all stakeholders before a bill as disastrous as this to public education is passed.

Name: Brian Hood

Comment: Please vote no. Being a resident in the Perry school district, I see where Perry is taking advantage of AEA services as a direct result of the recent tragedy. Im concerned the level of services school districts need would not be available

particularly in more rural areas.

Name: Susan Pickford

Comment: Respectfully, I want to express my opposition for HSB 542 and damage it will do to our education system in Iowa. Specifically, this bill will place undue burden on our schools and negatively impact the lives of our most vulnerable individuals as well as their families. I do support a sustainable way to increase teacher salaries in an equitable manner. Sincerely, Susan Pickford

Name: Michelle Arends

Comment: I have no idea how the investigation didn't show how beneficial and important the AEA is to districts, student with special needs, and really ALL children. Des Moines may not be affected by this. Iowa is more than just Des Moines! As a state we are in last place in mental health! Maybe the cause of low academic scores correlates with mental health! And if anyone at the state level has dug into trauma work! Sometimes schools have no idea what trauma students have been through or go through on a daily basis! If this bill passes, we will be 51st in the nation for special education in a couple of years. Nobody is going step up and privatize services because it's very complex, costly, and hard to implement. This disruption in services will negatively impact students with special needs and also nonspecial education children as their teachers will be picking up the extra slack. Public schools are already drowning in student needs like behavior and mental health. They need more help; not more responsibility! If this bill passes students with disabilities will suffer. All children will too. All students. The most recent proposal. While it does not cut AEAs it completely starves them to the point of ineffectiveness. Is there a plan to replace those services? All kids who attend a school in Iowa, they benefit from AEA services you just don't realize it. What is also not understood is that this proposal hurts districts in the long run. The DE does not provide thorough professional development or any other supportive service like AEAs do. The dollars that districts could keep to hire these services privately just would not be enough to replace all the services they lose without AEAs. Our teachers and administrators will be asked to do more with even less support. Stand up for kids. Stand up for teachers.

Name: Lisa Foster

Comment: I am writing to express my concerns related to HSB 542. During my 30+ years in education, the AEAs have provided valuable services to our district. Without the reading, math, behavior, and assessment consultants, the special ed consultants and psychologists, and the consultants who specialize in MTSS systems, our district would not be where it is today. Those AEA staff members have been crucial in helping us build a system that focuses on solid core instruction and an effective intervention system for students who fall below the benchmarks. Without the wealth of knowledge, AEA staff bring to the table, I am confident we would have a much larger population of students in need of special education services. Our AEA also helps provide critical professional development to our staff in a wide variety of areas. As the teacher leader, who is responsible for coordinating the professional development for our district, I often reach out to AEA, as they have the expertise and resources to support our specific needs. My concerns not only lie in the elimination of these valuable resources, but also in the elimination of the flow through dollars that currently go to AEAs to help pay for these services. With the elimination of these funds, districts in Iowa will not be able to afford the cost of the many specialists, consultants, resources, and digital materials we currently have access to. Additionally, district leaders will spend countless hours just trying to find some of these services. If you truly believe changes are needed, I asked that you delay action on this bill while you take time to talk to the schools, administrators, teachers, and families that will be impacted by the sweeping changes.

Name: Rick Vazquez

Comment: My name is Rick. I am a husband, police officer, and former army medic. My favorite title of all is as father to two beautiful daughters. Because of this title, I must ask that you vote NO on HSB 542. The AEA consultants for literacy, math, and science ensure that my daughters receive a top notch education. The autism consultant helped implement a LEAP classroom at my daughters school. Although my daughter doesn't have any special needs, she flourished in this classroom and learned so many wonderful social skills. Please continue to support the AEAs by voting NO to HSB 542.

Name: Luanne Bjorklund

Comment: The timing of this discussion couldn't be more apropos to my situation. I just completed my certificate for dependent adult abuse mandatory reporter and child abuse mandatory reporter training and these are all offered through the AEA. Because of the AEA, I am able to complete these at no cost and forward them to my school. I work as a special ed para educator in the middle school program. Every day, I see the need for AEA involvement. Whether it's through speech, mental health, IEP standards, or the online classes I just finished. My husband is a special ed teacher and without the AEA, it would be a struggle. Their knowledge and guidance is crucial to benefiting the students in need. The bill is absolutely unfounded and not in touch with what goes on in the every day school life environment.

Name: Brian Hood

Comment: Please vote no. Being a resident in the Perry school district, I see where Perry is taking advantage of AEA services as a direct result of the recent tragedy. I'm concerned the level of services school districts need would not be available particularly in more rural areas.

Name: Abby Lynn

Comment: I am deeply concerned for the negative impact on student's in Iowa if HSB 524 continues to move forward. The AEAs provide vital services to all children, not just children with special education needs. The AEAs ensure equitable services to students and educators across the state. Without the AEA system, students, educators, and districts in rural Iowa will suffer. They will no longer have access to digital and hard copy books and materials to support instruction. They will no longer have access to highly trained educational consultants that support them in person when they need it. They will no longer have access to crisis response teams that arrive as soon as tragedy strikes. The services that are left will be strained by the lack of collaborative teaming and support personnel. Although AEAs have three departments, we work together as a team to ensure the best outcome for Iowa's students. I support increased teacher pay, but I cannot support a bill that removes services from students in Iowa and ensures equal educational opportunities.

Name: Ellen Bassler

Comment: Hello! My name is Ellen Bassler. I am 66 years old and this is the first time in my life that I have been moved to write to one of my representatives asking for your help so I hope you understand how important this issue is to me! I beg you to please vote no to this proposed legislation! I have worked in Education in one form or another for over 20 years. I've worked in a variety of schools and with a wide age range of students so I have seen and talked to countless students who have been helped via the services provided by their Iowa AEA. Two students, in particular, come to mind one was born with a serious hearing impairment and the other had a terrible stutter. These two students were teased mercilessly because they were different. But, with the help of Speech/Language Pathologists (SLP) services provided by their Iowa AEA, both of them were able to greatly improve their speaking skills which affected every aspect of their lives. One went on to be a star basketball player. Both attended college one went to a trade school and became a welder. The other went to college and became a teacher. Both are contributing members of society to this day. I can't help but wonder how vastly different their lives would have been had the AEA not

provided these services. Both have told me repeatedly how grateful they are that their AEA was there to help. It is my understanding that Governor Reynolds plans to close all the AEAs in the state. I implore you to please vote against this legislation! Our children need and deserve the chance to continue to receive these services. Our very own grandson had speech issues as a toddler. He was referred to our local AEA who immediately sent a SLP to his home evaluate him. The SLP tested him and, thankfully, determined that he did not need ongoing services but instead provided our son and his wife with vocal exercises they could do with him to help improve his speech. The guidance provided by this SLP was life changing for my grandson and I am thankful to report that he speaks normally today because of it. In our case, we were lucky because our grandson didn't have a serious speech impediment but thousands of students do! The AEA provides the structure that enables those children to get services that will help them for the rest of their lives! Please don't take that away! We all know that, if left up to the individual schools especially the rural schools who are struggling financially these services will be greatly reduced and the children will be the helpless victims whose lives will suffer! But you have the ability to save our AEAs and thus allow our children (our future) to continue to receive these life changing and essential services/resources. I implore you to take a stand on this issue and help the children in our state get the help they so desperately need and deserve. I am counting on you to do the right thing and vote against closing IOWA AEAs! As you know, SLP services are just one branch of services provided by AEAs. There are so many other important services these agencies provide to our state! If you would like to speak to me personally about this, please feel free to call me at 5633700374 or email me at ebassler2002yahoo.com. Thank you for your serious consideration of this important request! Sincerely, Ellen Bassler 1741 Deer Run Drive Burlington, IA 52601 5633700374

Name: Madison Larsen

Comment: To whom this may concern, My name is Madison Larsen, and I am a Speech Language Pathologist for Northwest Area Education Agency (AEA). As a fifth year SLP serving Transitional Kindergarten through High School Students in the Sergeant Bluff-Luton School District, I would love for you to take a walk in my shoes of this past week with me! Collaborated with AEA staff and Local Education Agency (LEA) about continued implementation and current success of Restorative Practices. Attended Specially Designed Instruction training for LEA put on by AEA staff. Conversation about the appropriate curriculum for LEA moving forward as they wanted the expertise of AEA individuals. Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting with a family for a student with a extremely rare genetic disorder who shared their gratitude for their son refusing Early ACCESS services as an infant so that he could have a more successful life now. Received coaching regarding Universal Instruction Intervention Systems and Assessment/Database Decision Making that I apply to my own practices daily. Requested a literacy kit from the AEA to support a teacher who will be using the kit for her shared reading time in the special education classroom. Received van mail with more testing protocols as I needed more to the ever rising number of evaluations I have completed this year. Collaboration between myself, a general education teacher, and AEA staff about Assistive Technology services that can be utilized to help some of our general education students who need more support. Exploration of AEAs English Language Learners support material in order to collaborate with teachers about some newcomers. This is all in addition to diligently serving my caseload of 70 students, five IEP meetings, finalizing report cards, parent phone calls, contacting device company representatives, and writing evaluation reports. Every single one of the important tasks that I did this past week as mentioned in the bullet points would be eliminated if Governor Reynolds AEA Reform Bill is to pass. This would be such a disservice to children in every single school district in the state of Iowa. I CANNOT do my job to the fullest potential without the support of all the individuals serving Northwest Area Education Agency. Our students, ALL students, are general education students first and foremost. By providing teachers with professional development, collaborating on a daily/weekly

basis, and cultivating a culture of growth in order to best support our students and close the gaps, we all can help each student succeed. While I concede that evaluating educational systems and addressing the needs of students with disabilities is important, I strongly feel that fully comprehending how crucial allowing AEAs to provide all supports to rural districts like mine truly is. Lastly, all AEAs have gone through many thorough accreditation visits by the Iowa Department of Education since their inception, with the most recent being in the last two years. Completed in the fall of 2022, please review the results of Northwest AEA's most recent Iowa DoE accreditation visit here: bit.ly/nwaea2022accreditation If you take a minute to view it, you will see that there were no recommendations to change, revise, or eliminate any of the AEA services being offered. In fact, the recommendations were to better communicate the services that we have to offer to ensure they were being utilized. Think about the contradiction between that and the current statements being publicized about the AEA's ineffectiveness and lack of accountability. Thank you for your dedication to our community and the betterment of our future. Our students and their wellbeing are of utmost importance, and I hope that is reflected in all decisions. Thank you for your time and consideration! Best, Madison Larsen, M.A., CCCSLP

Name: Cari Lee

Comment: I would like to address that we are supportive of the raising teacher pay portion of this bill. We are opposed to the actions toward the AEA. The AEA helps so many students in the state of Iowa find resources to promote personal learning goals. I am hoping there will be a full review and a plan to make changes. To this bill!

Name: Jenny Caswell

Comment: Hello, I am writing today to encourage you to consider the negative impact that HSB 542 would have on all students if passed. I am a speechlanguage pathologist at Grant Wood AEA and was also born and raised in Iowa. I also have two children of my own, one with some additional needs. I am very concerned about what would happen if this bill would pass. I'm currently able to act as a building level resource for any child that needs support, brainstorming support with teachers and helping set up and collaborate with teachers as they provide general education interventions. I also can provide parents with materials and suggestions to help support growth at home for students who do not necessarily have severe enough needs to warrant an IEP. These supports will go away if I'm only able to provide special education services. Even if we just look at special education services, I currently check out all needed tests and many materials from the library at Grant Wood. I doubt any district would be able to mirror the vast resources available to conduct the best possible evaluations and provide the best possible therapy that are currently available to us as therapists. Additionally, many of the families I provide services for in the Marion Independent School District, which is not a rural district, would struggle to have access to services if they were not free and as easily accessible due to financial limitations. This includes kids with complex disabilities that require the use of some type of device to communicate. Devices that can be obtained through private vendors at times, but can also be denied through insurance at times. In those cases, we can do a trial of devices available through our library and when the best fit is found through data collected during the trials, school districts purchase the device for the student. Without the ability to check these devices out through the AEA, this would not be an option for families. Imagine, if you will, a child not able to communicate simple things, like when they need to use the bathroom. The child's device has been denied by insurance through a vendor. Thankfully, the child is able to trial a device through the school and AEA and now has a device to communicate when they need to use the bathroom, instead of leaving school staff to wonder where the student is going and why they are getting up each time they try to use the bathroom. This is a real situation that has happened during my ten years working for the AEAs. Iowa's children, especially the most vulnerable, are counting on all of us to protect the services they need to become the best versions of themselves. That is why I oppose this bill.

Name: Mary Jo Petersen

Comment: I would like to express my opposition to House Study Bill 542. I am an educator at a rural school in Eastern Iowa. The AEA is an invaluable resource to us and has provided so many resources, opportunities, and educator support over the years. We have staff from the AEA in our building to support students and educators daily, and weekly, depending on the service being provided. We have worked with the AEA to provide high quality professional development and resources to support our leadership team, and staff to put into place the PLC and MTSS system we are currently using. During the beginning learning, they worked with us all closely to ensure we understood the process and why it is so successful for students. They are our go to when we need support and questions answered from all areas, special education or general education. One of the most important aspects is that the AEA is local and available when needed. They provide access to assistive technology, media support and the support professionals no school can keep on staff. As a rural school, they are willing to come to us and bring the resources we need. If all resources and people have to come out of Des Moines, I worry they could not send the same daily or weekly support we currently receive. I also worry that the Department of Education would not have the staff to send needed support to all of our buildings to support students and staff at current levels. I strongly oppose HF 542 and encourage the committee to research all the resources the AEAs provide to all schools and consider how this bill can again hurt small rural schools. Please do not reduce access to the people, resources, and opportunities all students currently have available. Please continue to invest in our students. With respect, Mary Jo Petersen

Name: Cara Kramer

Comment: Please do not pass this bill. As a teacher I utilize services at the AEA for all of my students. They provide support for IEPs professional development, resources for both students and staff. As a parent both of my children currently use services through the AEA. My daughter was born premature and require services from Birththree. She learned how to sit up, crawl and walk with the help of the AEA therapists. She worked with staff of language development and overall growth. My son has a current IEP for academic and speech concerns. Without these services he would not be successful in school. Children, families and schools in Iowa need AEA services for all students.

Name: Carla Gust

Comment: I am a Republican voter who is against this because it will limit the resources available to small districts like my children attended in Audubon. My children have benefited from teachers having access to support beyond just special education. Our small districts cannot replace locally what AEA's provide. Pleass vote NO to moving this bill forward.

Name: Susan Carr

Comment: Please vote no on Bill HSB542, which represents a direct attack on Area Education Agencies and Iowa Public Schools. Although teacher pay increases would be welcome (if districts can get help sustaining this money), the actions toward the AEA are not. Over three decades I have worked in education, both through the AEA and public schools. I have seen first hand the amazing work these professionals have done together. AEA support provides public schools with access to professional development, crisis team support, and valuable input for teachers and parents in student educational plans in the high demands of 21st century learning... and so, so much more. Changes to the AEAs of this magnitude will be especially harmful to struggling students and rural districts those who need the most support. Send a positive message to the students and educators of Iowa. Support the AEAs and stop the passage of this bill.

Name: Carla Gust

Comment: I am a Republican voter who is against this because it will limit the resources available to small districts like my children attended in Audubon. My children have benefited from teachers having access to support beyond just special education. Our small districts cannot replace locally what AEA's provide. Please vote NO to moving this bill forward.

Name: Jean Conover

Comment: As a retired special education teacher I can confirm the team at AEA was essential to the success of our students. They provide the resources, training, support, and classroom strategies that made students successful. They provide these services efficiently and timely. Passing this bill will take all the support from students. Our students need to improve their skills. This will not happen without AEA support

Name: Sharon Crawford

Comment: I have a unique perspective on this bill. My husband and I own a farm in Central Iowa (and pay Iowa taxes), I work in Council Bluffs and my primary residence is in Nebraska. In 2001, I hopped the river from a career as a teacher and high school counselor in Omaha, Nebraska to Council Bluffs, Iowa, where I have been a counselor in the same wonderful high school for 23 years. I was initially drawn to the change because of the amazing individuals who I knew worked in the school and because of the salary differential. It was well known, 20 plus years ago, that Iowa teacher salaries were substantially higher than Nebraska. (Not necessarily the case now.) I loved the job I left in Omaha but I never regretted my decision. This is, in part, due to the support that our school and our district had from the AEA initially AEA 13 later, Green Hills AEA. I was dumbfounded by the accessibility of support and collaboration and care from the AEA for our students, for our school, and for excellence in my profession. In Omaha, I was lucky to speak with a school psychologist 2 times per year! They were stretched so thin among many schools and there was not time to collaborate with them not because they didn't want to, but because they simply had no time. The school district, not an AEA, funded their salaries. However, I rarely, as a counselor, was able to collaborate with a school psychologist. In contrast, when I came to Council Bluffs, we had a school psychologist from the AEA that spent at least half of her time IN OUR building! Her knowledge base was amazing and she made herself available for IEP meetings, parent consultation, questions from faculty, testing, staff development, crisis management and intervention she was a team member, side by side with us a resource that proved to be valuable time and time again. With the sad reality of the rise of school shootings in the US, she spearheaded a team to safely and compassionately train staff and partner with law enforcement in a proactive manner. She, and other school psychologists from the AEA, came when students and teachers' deaths impacted both students and staff to provide a community of caring and wisdom in a time that our community was suffering. We have been grateful to them all and have looked to them for leadership during some very tough times and they have delivered with compassion and wisdom. Our school, students and community is better because of them. I could speak similar praise about the countless AEA staff that have served during my 23 years in our Iowa school from the AEA graduation coaches that build relationships with our students who struggle with attendance and need extra support to connect to school and not drop out they make home visits, they sit with them during tough times, they communicate with their probation officers to figure out how to help them make better decisions. They stand shoulder to shoulder with our kids as their cheerleaders and school moms and school dads. They provide stability in the tough world of that some of our kids navigate daily kids that have lost parents and siblings to drugs, to prison, to abuse. I've worked with AEA occupational therapists and speech pathologists who have helped students relearn how to walk and talk after brutal illnesses have robbed them of the lives they once knew. With AEA teachers of the hard of hearing and the blind who advocate for and help our kids with special needs navigate through the halls and classrooms in our school, which is also THEIR school, because of the assistive technology and accommodations that make learning

accessible to ALL kids!!! The AEA also provides such amazing leadership and professional development to ALL school staff in Iowa it didnt matter if the school district is urban or rural if they are in poverty or wealth the AEA provides a LEVEL playing field for all schools do that staff can have resources and training in the things they need to KEEP Iowa schools STRONG!!!! Small districts will not be overlooked or forgotten because they have equal access to AEA services! Please do NOT take this away!!! I am a better counselor because I work in an Iowa school that has access to ACCESSIBLE, quality, cutting edge resources because of our AEA. The AEA trainings I have received in regard to mental health, have equipped me to better deal with the increasing mental health needs of my students. I can reach out to the AEA and ask for professional input, for parent presentations, for physical resources, crisis intervention and the AEA shows up in a BIG way!!! Most importantly, my students and students throughout Iowa are better because of the AEA. Students stay in school, they grow, they graduate, they thrive, they become better Iowans!!! This bill is being pushed through without the time to consider the negative impact it will have on public education in Iowa.. and on OUR kids. Improving teacher salaries is great its what brought me to Iowa but the services and opportunities for our kids is why I chose to stay. Lets support teachers without attaching crushing AEA cuts to the back end of this. Are we giving a better salary to teachers and then taking away their resources??? This doesnt square up!!!! Over the years, I know that I have had many, many students that were able to overcome some very devastating circumstances and make the decision to stay in school because of the AEA staff and resources that were readily available. We cant lose that. The cost is too great.

Name: Molly Masat

Comment: VOTE AGAINST HSB 542I have been an educator working in Iowa public schools as a School Psychologist through the AEA for 20 years. When I was completing my graduate degree in a neighboring state, I had heard through my training program about the amazing things happening in Iowa. Iowa was truly regarded as a model for public education. It terrifies and saddens me to see the predicament we are in. I am writing this letter to implore you to please oppose HSB 542 as it is detrimental to schools, students, and families in Iowa. Students in Iowa are first and foremost general education students. ALL students educated in Iowa have benefitted from the services of the AEAs in some capacity regardless of their eligibility status. If AEAs focus solely on Special Ed. services, how will schools/districts manage substitutes and professional development? Are schools going to be getting increased funding to hire special education professionals on their own or come up with new collective solutions? As the AEAs compete with each other and with private companies, are they still required to provide free special ed. services for private schools? As we already face such a lack of childcare options, who is going to coordinate Early Childhood 06 programs? Is there a plan for rehousing Media Services? Iowa is already significantly lacking mental health supports for students and families and this bill would make access to services even harder, especially for those in rural communities. Please consider how these unimaginable cuts to the AEA systems will impact the students, families, teachers, and districts in Iowa, especially our small, rural communities. Please vote AGAINST HSB 542.

Name: Kathryn Vradenburg

Comment: To whom is may concern, I would like to explain why I have a concern with HSB 542. I am in my 11th year as a special education teacher. I have been to three different schools, three different towns all in my 11 years. I have worked with a variety of students who have a variety of needs and services. While I provide the services and minutes to my students, I would not have been able to do it without the AEA. The AEA has been there to support myself and my students in all of my 11 years. Being in different towns, I have had the opportunity to work with different AEAs. I have worked with a variety of people, and to name just a few they have been, Autism specialists, the media specialists, technology, special education consultants, psychologist, social workers, speech therapists, occupational therapists,

and physical therapists. All provided by the AEA. Without the AEA supporting myself, my school, and my students, I would not be the teacher I am today and my students would not have succeeded without them. I have my masters in special education and I know from experience, college teaches you only so much, on going learning and classes teach you only so much, but what I have learned from working with different experts and classes I have taken through the AEA, has helped myself excel as a teacher and my students succeed and overcome mountains that they would not have been able to do so without the AEA. Just to name a few of these classes, learning about autism, assistive technology, ABA behavioral classes, and alternate assessment, I would not have learned what I know now. Not only has the AEA helped myself, but the AEA services have helped many of my students succeed academically, socially, behaviorally, physically, and mentally. One example of this is, over the last 5 years I have worked with a student who has Autism. When he first came to my classroom he was a student who was nonspeaking verbally. He has an iPad to speak on through a communication app. This iPad, updated technology, assistive technology and the program was all provided to us at school, himself, and his family through the AEA. This student has had on going services through school but also through the AEA. When this student came to me in kindergarten, they didn't know if he would ever be able to talk verbally. However, this student is now a 4th grader who is speaking sentences, expressing his needs and wants, having conversations, singing songs, reading books, and so much more! This student has had special education services with AEA playing a major role starting around 1218 months for early childhood interventions when he wasn't speaking. Without having these services through the AEA, getting services early, getting a assistive technology device to use for communication, and consistent speech services, he would not be talking like he is today. This new bill would take that away from him and other children like him. Why would we take that away from him? Why would we take success away from all students who need extra support. We always say no child should be left behind. We always say students with special education services are general education students first. While that is all true, some students can't succeed without extra support and this extra support comes from the AEA!! Please take the time and read my comment, my worry about this bill but also listen to the people who are in it everyday with these students. Listen to the the teachers, listen to the parents, listen to the staff working in schools every day with students who need these supports, listen to the amazing people who work for the AEA. We want parents to have more of a voice, then why wouldn't we listen to the parents advocating for their children to have services through AEA. I am begging you, do not take the AEA away from us. The AEA is needed now more than ever! Thank you. Kathryn Vradenburg
Special Education Teacher

Name: Jodi Maddy

Comment: Stop gutting public education and its supporting services. We need more certainly not less help for teachers and students. This is destroying our schools. Please stop.

Name: Jacqueline Osgood

Comment: I'm here to express my concern about HSB 542. While I fully support raising teacher salaries, this is not the way to do it. Schools are not prepared to offer all the services that the AEAs provide. This bill eliminates the AEA experts and expects school personnel to have the training necessary to provide all services. There also has been no clear explanation of how services will look if schools opt to remain with a DE run AEA. I feel this bill is being pushed through at a unnecessarily fast rate. A comprehensive study of how AEAs can be more efficient and how prepared schools are to take on all that the AEAs do should be completed first.

Name: Tracy Jarett

Comment: I want all members to know I oppose HSB542. As a teacher I received most of my professional learning from the AEA. It was all in the areas of Math, Science, and Literacy. It is through high quality Professional learning that educators are able to

implement best practice routines and adopt high quality instructional materials that allow achievement gaps to close. It is also how educators are able to check out materials and find resources districts cannot afford but are available through media services. Thank you for your time and please vote no on HSB542

Name: Karena Haage

Comment: Karena Haage Instructional Strategist II KCSDE am a teacher at Keokuk Community School District, I strongly urge you to vote no to House Study Bill 542. My students and I have personally experienced the benefits of AEA in numerous ways. The School Social Worker and Consultant through AEA has worked countless hours with me to provide the best resources, assessments, curriculum, interventions, and IEPs to accommodate my students and other students in my school district. AEA also provides essential training for our schools, the opportunities are endless, here are just a few of the trainings that have made my job better; training for paraprofessionals, mandatory reporter, bloodborne pathogens, Achieve System, training for general education teachers that work with special education students, and Dyslexia trainings. AEA provides speech therapy to an extremely large number of students in my district. Other services that benefit my students are occupational therapy and vision services. AEA staff and services are essential in the growth of our students and our future, please vote no on HSB542. Thank you!

Name: Amy Bucciferro

Comment: To whom it may concern. I would like to express my concern with the house bill 542. As an employee of the AEA and family member who has received services, losing the vast support of all professions in the AEA would be detrimental to all students. The AEA staff support students and teachers in general education and special education. Without the AEA able to share professionals, school districts will have difficulty finding staff and funding to provide the same supports in the districts. This would be detrimental to the smaller school districts as funding is already limited. Please reconsider the impact of this bill and what's best for our teachers and students.

Name: Amanda McMartin

Comment: I am reaching out concerning HSB 542. Please slow down the process and review the facts and implications this bill will cause. I live in a rural district with three children and have major concerns about the disservice that would happen to them if this bill passes. My daughter receives speech services and there were questions about her having dyslexia. The teachers were able to reach out to the AEA's Literacy Consultants to review my daughter's case and get ideas on what interventions can be done in the classroom on how to better support her. Without their expertise, my daughter would continue to struggle. The teachers and students need the AEA's, there's no way our rural districts and families can continue to receive the professional development and support to take care of our children if this bill passes. The teachers deserve a raise as well, but that does not have to coincide with taking away the support they receive from the AEA. It takes a village. Their administration would fully be able to support them with professional development, literacy needs, print and technology needs if this bill passes which then falls back to the children, the children would be negatively impacted. Look at the site visits, and talk to the school administrators and families that have received services. Please slow down the process and do a full review before making such drastic changes that would have major impacts on schools and students.

Name: Katie Moore

Comment: The AEA is a vital resource to Iowa that ensures resources are given to schools and families that need it. As a teacher who has worked with the AEA in the past and present there work ensures students with special needs get the help and support they need. There are many resources they provide and to get rid of the program would be a disservice to Iowan families and teachers.

Name: Brooke Fischels

Comment: Iowa's AEAs provide valuable teacher training and resources for me. I teach math at Ottumwa High School. The AEAs have consistently been my goto for professional education, coursework for relicensure, as well as helping me deal with the everchanging educational landscape. They push teachers to do better, review data, adopt new practices, and embrace technology that will engage students. Nothing will fill this gap, especially in schools like mine that are in rural parts of the state. I oppose any legislation that eliminates their guidance, consultation, and expertise in education.

Name: Melissa Hart

Comment: I am here to encourage you to vote NO on HSB 542. I am a parent and employee in BCSD. The services Iowa AEA's provide benefit ALL students and staff within a school district. Stripping the AEA will have a huge negative impact across the state. We are a military family that chose to retire and stay in Iowa. The education system was a huge factor in our decision and an area that I continue to encourage families to consider making Iowa their home. I do not want to see our state struggle because these vital resources have been taken away. NO to HSB 542

Name: Cindy McCarty

Comment: I have been a licensed, Speech/Language Pathologist in Iowa since 1976. I worked for the AEA for seven years and have since worked in the medical setting and private practice. I currently own and operate an outpatient rehabilitation center serving many children and adults. So many of the children we see have complex health and learning issues and also receive AEA services in the schools. It takes many hands to accommodate the complex needs of these children. The AEA provides so many critical services to ALL schools and ALL children. There may be some internal restructuring issues that would be helpful, but to deconstruct the AEA and all they do does not make sense to me. Small districts cant afford to hire professionals needed for these complex children and with the growing needs of students with mental health issues we are lucky to have those support services from the current AEA. I am always in favor of higher pay for teachers, but we cant expect teachers to handle the extra issues of the therapy and mental health needs of their students. Please do not dismantle the AEA. I would strongly oppose that.

Name: Alexis Kingery

Comment: I am opposed to HSB542 because it will dismantle our AEA system negatively affecting the children of Iowa.

Name: Kelly McCollough

Comment: To my elected officials,I would like to express my opposition to HSB 542. As an educator who works closely with my local AEA (Mississippi Bend) and the Grant Wood AEA I ask you to vote no on this issue. The support our students and school staff receive from the professionals at the AEAs is imperative. Schools across the state would not be able to support ALL students without the assistance of our local AEAs. Iowa's students need the various programming our AEAs provide in order to be successful. A "no" vote for HSB 542 is a yes vote for ALL children in Iowa.

Name: Teran Buettell

Comment: To Whom It May Concern,I am writing to express my opposition to the provisions of HSB 542 that gut the AEA system. I work as a Challenging Behavior and Autism Specialist for Great Prairie AEA and have seen the importance of a wellrounded AEA for support of students with complex and intense needs. First of all, ALL students are general education students first, so supports in the area of general education are critical to the success of special education students. Secondly, often, these students require additional supports in instruction through collaboration of those with expertise in content areas and those with expertise in individualization of

strategies for learning. This cannot be accomplished seamlessly without the current system of supports. Third, the AEAs are currently providing mental health services onsite to schools that have chosen to participate in this offering. It would be reckless to rip away these supports at a time when mental health services for children have been clearly shown to be inadequate and inaccessible to Iowas children, especially in rural areas. The provisions of this bill which eviscerate services will disproportionately impact small, rural areas, which represent the majority of our schools. Please support increased teacher pay. Please support competency requirements for teachers. Please support improvement of literacy training in teacher preparation programs. But, do not destroy a system that has served Iowa well for 50 years and been held up as exemplary across the nation. If improvements are needed, lets ensure that there is a convergence of data to support the need for such improvement and lets involve ALL stakeholders in deciding what those changes should look like. This decision will impact hundreds of thousands of Iowans for decades. It matters.

Name: Laurie Henze-Wagler

Comment: No. Just no. The only good thing in this bill is in regard to raising teachers salaries. The rest, no. Someone should take the time to find out who helped get the Area Education Agencies going in Iowa in the first place Senator Charles Grassley. Talk to him. From what I can see the need has increased since that time, as more students are found with needs that CAN be met, and therefore the lives of not only students, but also entire families can be given services to help their child reach their full potential. I can still remember when there were kids that never went to school. I am now living in a house where there was a son who, because he wasn't able to "fit in" to a school setting, had no formal education. I was born in 1961, and I know that this young man was not the only child who (though older than I was by at least a decade) wasn't welcomed inside the doors of any institute of learning. Many of these kids, largely due to the costs involved in caring for them,(nevermind providing them with any sort of education) became wards of the state and were sent away to live in institutions, where family could visit, but were nothing like an actual home. Then there are the THOUSANDS of kids who just need a little help, THOUSANDS more who, with a bit more time and testing can be properly diagnosed and their true needs addressed. None of which will happen unless the system which HAS to include the people who manage these services as well as the actual providers of the services is able to function. Would a hospital function with only doctors and nurses? No building, no supplies? People used to have to get on a horse and go for the doctor...thankfully before my time. We have come a long way since then. The question is, will our legislature see it? What is the agenda Governor Reynolds is wishing to accomplish with the passage of this bill? Is her goal to defund another integral piece of public education? (Private institutions are not bound by the same duties to students with special needs, in fact, they can simply deny them admission). Rural communities, like mine will undoubtedly suffer the most from the elements in this bill. Look around, there are many such communities in this state. Take a drive in the country, they are hard to miss. Why not actually spend some time and try to IMPROVE the system instead of destroying it? You risk losing highly qualified, hard working, dedicated people. Many of whom will leave education even more, I believe, will leave Iowa. Lastly, as someone who believes in the sanctity of life, who is in this Grand Old Party primarily because of that deep set belief, We HAVE to care for the children that are born in this state /country. ALL of them. There is no such thing as a "Normal" child. There are just children. Children all need care, might not all be the same care, but then aren't we meant to give each child what they need to be successful? Thank you for reading my comment.

Name: Carmen Hosack

Comment: I am just a grandmother these days, but please support out AEA'S. They do immeasurable good in our education system. As a life long resident of Iowa, it saddens me that the current executive administration in this states puts the wealthy

above state needs. Our education system has slipped in quality, by no fault of the educators. Responsibility lies solely with the government. Please take this opportunity to step towards reversing this and support our public education as it should be. Carmen Hosack

Name: Holly Messenger

Comment: I oppose bill HSB 542. As a mother to a significantly disabled child, our lives have been enhanced greatly by the AEAs early access services. Now that my son is in elementary school, I'd like to remind that all students are general education students first. Multiple supports provided by the AEA that this bill would eliminate would greatly affect not only my son's education, but every Iowa child's education as well. This is not moving us in the direction of equitable public education for all Iowa children, and it will put our education professionals, already stretched thin, in a place with even less support. I implore you to vote NO on this bill.

Name: Patty Burrell

Comment: I am confused and upset with the legislation to reduce funds for AEA. Schools will lose money and AEA support. These services are needed and schools don't have general funds to cover this. Smaller schools and schools with lower tax bases will suffer the most. I am disappointed with our state leadership and the lack of focus on public education. I am hoping that you will listen to your constituents and make sure this doesn't pass.

Name: Nicholas Lapointe

Comment: My name is Nicholas Lapointe and I live in the SE side of Cedar Rapids, Iowa. I am contacting you to oppose the passing of HSB 542 in its current revision or any future revisions. I do not believe it was written by Iowans. I do not think it is beneficial for Iowans, our children, their educators, nor the support systems that they all rely on. Area Education Agencies provide vital services to students and families in our community. The services provided are part of our social contract with those who have the most need. Privatizing these services, or even moving in the direction of privatization, I think is an error that will have significant impacts on all Iowans. I believe that the AEAs are the most effective and efficient means to distribute the costs of these services. In addition, I think moving in the direction of HSB 542 will most certainly impact our rural communities the most. It will contribute to necessitate families needing special education services to move to more metropolitan communities to have adequate access to services. This disregard for our rural communities seems to be logically inconsistent with our current Governor's political leanings. I think this should be emphasized in order to compel bipartisan coordination to oppose this bill. I believe this bill was not written by Iowans, it's not in the interest of Iowans, and I urge you to resist its progress.

Name: Valerie Schmidt

Comment: I am writing today in opposition to HSB 542. AEA services in Iowa are essential to the education of all children from early childhood through school age and for some, until the age of 21. The programs and services all Iowa schools receive from the AEA are invaluable to providing a quality education to all students. Resources, inservice training for teachers and administrators, and special education services are vital to all schools, but especially Iowa's rural school. I am currently retired, but I was a special education teacher and Director of Special Education for the Fort Madison Community School District. I also was a Special Education Consultant for Great Prairie AEA. As a teacher and administrator, I relied heavily on the AEA to help me provide the best education for my students. I could not have done my job without the AEA staff to support and provide quality services for my student's needs. Again, I beg you to vote NO to HSB 542 for the children of Iowa.

Name: Tammy Askeland-Nagle

Comment: I urge you to oppose HSB542 and support keeping all AEA services intact. As a parent to three schoolage children in Iowa, my family has been positively impacted by the services provided by AEAs. Some of these direct services include speech evaluations as a toddler and 504 Plan support following a medical diagnosis. In addition, their teachers have engaged in professional learning in the areas curriculum, instruction, and assessment for nearly every content area (literacy, math, science, social studies, computer science). This bill takes educational resources like FOSS kits, classroom sets of books, assistive technology, and more out of the hands of children. If all of these resources are no longer provided by AEAs, how will students and teachers get the support they need? The loss of such resources will harm the education of my children and all kids across the state whether they attend a school that is private, public, urban or rural. Please oppose this bill.

Name: Sue Slavens

Comment: Please vote NO to House Study Bill 542 for proposed changes to AEAs in Iowa. As a retired Pleasant Valley School District employee, I saw first hand the positive impact AEA personnel had with our special education students, students with disabilities and services for general education students. School staff, teachers and parents alike relied on AEA personnel's expertise to help students achieve and work on being successful in school. I am strongly opposed to this bill because of the damage it will do to our education system in Iowa.

Name: Nicole Walker

Comment: As an educator and a mother, I see the value of our AEAs daily. When I think of the hundreds of special education students I have taught over the years, I know that I could have not done my job well without the support of the AEA. Our AEAs provide valuable trainings to help me be a better teacher. They give me resources when struggling with how best to help educate a student. My special education students are general education students first. What benefits them, can also benefit any student in my room. Access to research materials, the entire science curriculum I used for several years, and multiple reading resources are vital to all learners in the classroom and would disappear under this bill. Those reading resources I see my own daughter use, both in school and at home. She has developed a love of learning and reading, in part because of the AEA. Our AEAs are vital pieces of the education of our children. They need to be protected, not gutted. I stand with my AEA and hope that our legislators do the right thing and do not support this bill.

Name: Mary Schoeppner

Comment: I do not agree with putting Teacher Salary increases with the bill to dismantle the AEA'S. Teachers deserve increased pay, but not at the expense of the organization who helps them address difficult situations. The AEA'S are there from early access through High School and have employees who work together to give a comprehensive plan to help each individual achieve their maximum potential. Dismantling this major student aid would be a disaster. It is NOT fair to attach these two issues. When teachers try to support this major resource, they jeopardize their chance at a salary increase. Who knows better the value AEA's give than the people who use them daily? Keep our AEA's who work with our teachers to help all students!

Name: Amelia Tuel

Comment: I would like the AEA programming to stay as it is. Having grown up in a small rural school district the access to learning materials and special education services will be unable to be met by other programs.

Name: Steve Hollan

Comment: O: State of Iowa Elected Officials: I send this email to you on behalf of the AEA's across the state of Iowa. What the governor is asking you to pass is a BAD idea for

our students, families, teachers and communities in the state of Iowa. It will NOT fix the issue, it will only magnify the issue. Yes, we may have a large number of students on IEP's, Individualized Education Plans, but cutting AEA to the bare bone, only Special Education consultants, is NOT a good plan. Schools rely on Literacy Consultants and Math Consultants. (Along with many other AEA professionals) Examples: Just to give a few... When it comes time for a new curriculum, schools rely HEAVILY on the AEA professionals to help narrow the selection down. School staff do NOT have the time to preview 50 plus different companies to narrow the list down to a handful to really dig into and investigate and see if it is a good fit. Which companies measure up to state and local standards. AEA consultants help districts with that process. They, the AEA consultants, are a HUGE resource. When a staff member is struggling with a student and they need extra assistance, teachers can reach out to the AEA consultants for extra guidance with literacy and math professionals to come in and assist. I have heard of them working 1:1 with the teacher to guide them, teaching a lesson in the classroom for the teacher to observe, team teaching a lesson together, giving them extra support to help with students that are struggling. The AEA consultants are a HUGE resource. AEA math and literacy consultants are also able to test and work with students that are struggling and help the classroom teacher diagnose what the underlying issues are. The AEA consultant helps map out a plan for more individualized instruction and also helps provide resources to the classroom teacher who is responsible to provide this individualized instruction. Classroom teachers don't have the time to do all of this. AEA consultants are a HUGE resource! My own personal example: my daughter was a child that benefitted from early access AEA speech help. When she was 3 she had a HUGE problem with stuttering. We had the AEA come to our house to work with her, and offer my wife and I extra support and guidance for helping her, for 18 months. This was a HUGE benefit that our local AEA and speech professionals helped us with. When she was in 1st grade she was able to "graduate" from needing AEA speech support. What they offered to her and us as parents was HIGHLY valuable! Once again proving that AEA's are a HUGE and valuable resource that we can't and shouldn't dissolve. The AEA's offer so much more than what the governor is wanting you to pass and restructure them to. Please remember: ALL AEA consultants are a HUGE resource! PLEASE do NOT allow this to happen! This is a BAD decision and will NOT reap any good or benefit our schools and students. Just my opinion, what is causing the increase in IEP's and our students scoring lower, lack of parenting. Children are given electronic devices to entertain themselves. Parents are NOT spending time with their children reading, coloring, playing board games, playing with playdoh, etc.... Lots of parents don't/can't help with homework. If you don't believe this, ask an elementary teacher. Kids are coming to school that have never colored, don't know how to hold a crayon or pencil, never been read to, don't play board games. If you don't believe this, ask a preschool or kindergarten teacher. This isn't an AEA problem... PLEASE do what is right. At the very least, keep the AEA's fully staffed and do a study for a year or two and gather data. Don't make quick rash decisions that will HARM our students, schools and communities. I am OK with change, but making the change without data is NOT a good idea. What data do you have to prove this is an AEA problem? I believe more data is available that shows it may be a parenting problem. Thanks for listening,

Name: Patrick Honan

Comment: I strongly oppose HSB 542. Public schools are the backbone of our country and our democracy. Every effort should be made to study how recent funding reductions have impacted the agencies and to determine the appropriate level of funding and staffing needed to provide quality services from these nationally recognized organizations. I strongly oppose the bad governance displayed in what appears to be an hostile takeover. The Department of Education recognizes the AEAs and their professional capabilities in which they perform. Again, the study should be to determine appropriate funding and staffing levels needed to provide quality services. Stop the effort to underfund and undermine.

Name: Tiffany Stueve

Comment: I vote no to this proposed bill. Students need these resources undoubtedly. I have two kids who have wildly benefitted from having these options in school. My son is a better reader because of the options he has been given. My daughter learns new words every single day because of the options shes been given. To take these away from students now or future students would be a disservice to them. Students need these options today and forever.

Name: Lyndi FlugumCollins

Comment: As a taxpayer, as a parent of current public school students, as a product of Iowa schools, I urge legislators to reconsider this bills approach to revamping the public education system. teachers deserve more pay for their professional expertise. It is unethical to lump increases in teacher pay as a condition of losing significant general education support services. financially, pushing the necessary general education services provided by the AEAs onto school districts is not more efficient than sharing resources (curriculum, consulting, technology, mental health, etc.)families will have to absorb significant costs and responsibilities for things that AEAs can provide pretty efficiently. For example, I was a general education student who benefited from hearing monitoring. Had my parents in rural northern Iowa had to make specialty medical appointments, taking time off work and driving for hours, it would have impacted our family budget in significant ways. Maybe the AEAs need some reorganization or realignment, but this bill will cause significant negative ripple effects at every level of Iowas communities. It will not work and will harm all of Iowas students.

Name: Leah Arnold

Comment: As a proud Iowa citizen who strongly believes in the power of education, I would like to express that I am in opposition of House Study Bill 542. Districts across Iowa rely heavily on AEA staff and resources to support all students. I have seen firsthand as an AEA school psychologist how many students and families have been directly and indirectly impacted by the AEA. If this bill were to go through, I fear that many districts and communities will be negatively impacted and will not be able to have regular access to the support and resources they need to best serve their students. Please consider opposing this bill and instead conversing and collaborating with AEAs and other stakeholders about how we can continue to work together to serve the children and families of Iowa.

Name: Matt Denner

Comment: AEA services are crucial to Iowa students. The AEAs should be strengthened with more funding, not gutted. AEA services were vital to me growing up as a part of my school's Extended Learning Program for "gifted and talented" students and helped me stay engaged when I was bored with regular classes. Now, more than ever, teachers need additional support. Iowa AEAs work, and the best step now is providing the additional funding they need rather than starting from scratch with untested solutions.

Name: Caleb Bonjour

Comment: I'm writing to you today not just in my capacity as the superintendent of a small, rural Iowa school district but as an advocate for a community whose heartbeat is its school. My name is Caleb, and alongside my wife Amanda, who is also a dedicated school leader and teacher, we have been at the forefront of nurturing the potential of every child in the districts that we serve and have served in the past. Our district is more than a collection of buildings where learning happens; it is the cornerstone of our community, a place where futures are shaped, and dreams are nurtured. The intimate nature of our rural setting means that the successes and challenges of our school are deeply intertwined with the life of every family here. The proposed

legislative changes to cut services from Area Education Agencies (AEAs) present not just a challenge, but a crisis for us. These services are not just supplementary; they are the pillars upon which we build our educational programs. For instance, we are currently in the midst of adopting new curriculums in literacy, aligned with the Science of Reading. This initiative is critical for our students, many of whom rely on the school as their primary source of learning and support. The AEA has been instrumental in this process, providing us with resources and expertise that are otherwise beyond our reach. The AEA's role in developing our Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is another example of their indispensable support. This system is vital for early identification and support of students with learning and behavioral needs. Without the AEA's guidance, we would struggle to build a powerful system to provide timely and effective interventions. Furthermore, our district's socioeconomic dynamics add another layer of complexity. We do not have the same resources or funding as larger districts, making the AEA's role even more crucial in leveling the playing field. This is exemplified in our expansion of Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses, aligning with the Future Ready Iowa initiative. The AEA has been our navigator, ensuring that our students are prepared for the workforce and contributing positively to our state's economy. On a more personal note, the support I have received from the AEA has been a lifeline during the most challenging times of my career. I recall vividly the occasions when student tragedies plunged our school into mourning. The AEA's Crisis Response Team was there, not just with professional assistance, but with genuine empathy and support, guiding us through those dark days. Their presence was a source of strength and comfort, not just for me, but for the entire community. The recent tragedy in Perry brought back those memories, but also highlighted the AEA's unwavering commitment. Their immediate mobilization of over 100 staff members to assist in the crisis is a testament to their indispensable role in our educational system. One of my gravest concerns is the future of our district in the wake of these cuts. The AEA has been a partner in every sense, helping us tackle every new challenge, from legislative changes to the implementation of new educational initiatives. They have been a stabilizing force in a constantly evolving educational landscape. The absence of their support will lead to gaps that we are ill-equipped to fill, both financially and resource-wise. This change threatens to erode the quality of education we can provide, widening the gap between rural and urban schools and potentially setting our students on a back foot in their educational journey. Moreover, the proposed legislation risks destabilizing the staffing and operational efficiency of the AEA, which in turn would ripple through to our schools. In an era where we are already grappling with teacher shortages and recruitment challenges, this move could exacerbate an already critical situation. In light of these concerns, I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter further with you in person. Whether it be a meeting at the Capitol or a casual conversation over a meal, I am willing and eager to engage in a meaningful dialogue about the future of Iowa's education. Your understanding and support in this matter are crucial for us. In conclusion, I urge you to consider the far-reaching impact of this legislation. Our AEAs are more than service providers; they are integral to the fabric of Iowa's education system, especially for rural communities like ours. A decision to cut their services is a decision that will reverberate through every classroom, every student's life, and every future that we are striving to build. Thank you for your time and for considering the profound impact of your decision on the future of education in our beloved state.

Name: Diane Sheets

Comment: To whom it may concern. I strongly oppose HSB 542 and how it will affect AEAs and the support they have for our students and families. As a retired PreK teacher, I have seen first hand how the AEA consultants, therapists, and social workers have helped the young children in my care. The consultants can be a first line of contact for staff and parents who may be struggling with finding the correct path to help their child succeed. Dismantling the services provided by AEA would have a negative impact on the educational services in our state.

Name: Kate Wilson

Comment: As the wife of an administrator, I often hear about the struggles of serving all the students needs. Asking our schools to take on more responsibility for providing specialized services is pushing our teachers and administrators one step closer to retirement. We need these experienced staff members in our schools.

Name: Wendy Leaders

Comment: Oppose HSB 542

Name: Sara Kreutz

Comment: If you change AEAs funding to contract services from local districts you are in essence making them little more than a puppet of local districts. When their funding is separate they have some more authority to tell school districts what is best practice. If their funding is changed to come from local school districts then they will be little more than a yes man for the district that is paying their wages. You are eliminating the checks and balances that are necessary to make sure children get the services they need. They are the experts and if they are getting paid by the school district you are giving all the control to officials in districts that may be good money managers but not necessarily experts in what students need. Money talks. This is a disaster for our Iowa children let alone all the additional services that AEA provides that would be eliminated such as teacher training , lending library and a host more. Please do not allow this to happen

Name: Juli Whitehead

Comment: As a former educator and now a substitute teacher, I am deeply concerned about this bill. In general, I am for less government, but in this case, less government will mean leaving our smaller schools high and dry. Our children need and deserve the services the AEA offers, and to think that the individual schools can somehow hire these services on their own with their cost savings is not realistic. Teachers and schools need our support more than ever right now, and this is the wrong way to go about providing that. Please vote no.

Name: Jessica Hoppmann

Comment: I would like to express my opposition and concern with House Study Bill 542. As a substitute teacher in our local public schools and a mother of two children attending these schools, I have seen first hand the value of our local AEA in its current capacity. Our local Green Hills AEA was prompt and essential in helping me even determine how to become a substitute teacher to assist our local school, and all of their current services are essential for the success to our rural school system. I have heard only dismay from our Iowa teachers/staff/administrators as to the effects of reducing the ability of the AEA to do the necessary and desperately needed services that help our schools to be more effective and thus greatly impact the education and future of our children. Please vote no to this bill.

Name: Dianna Romanick

Comment: To whom it may concern, please vote no to the HSB 542 bill. The AEA not only provides services for school age children, but also for children birth to 3. Getting rid of the AEA would be a disservice to the children in the State.

Name: Andrew Messer

Comment: I strongly appose HSB542 as an educator. Removing services that the AEA provides would mean an even bigger cut to public education. Everything from special ed services, teacher professional development, and counseling services would be negatively impacted. As en educator, HSB542 would just be another wall put in front of public educators to do their jobs.

Name: Shawna Harris

Comment: The AEAs have such an impact on our schools. They are the silent partner that supports and provides for our district. The state is mandating the Computer Science in the schools and timelines. Without their support and know how, we would not have any direction. The media services provided to our district help us out as we are unable to put all of these items in our district. Getting rid of any of the AEA services would be detrimental to kids and our district. It's unfortunate that people making these decisions have never taught or set foot in a classroom. Consider the kids you are affecting by removing any of the AEA services.

Name: Jill Mathes

Comment: Please vote no to HSB 542. Throughout my educational career, AEAs have supported me in so many important ways, including: *Counseling services and whole building support during a crisis last year following the death of a student. *Professional development in reading, math, science, social studies, social emotional learning, classroom management, and technology. Every year of my teaching career, AEA experts have furthered my knowledge in all areas of teaching. *Problemsolving for students who are struggling academically and/or behaviorally. *Media: Provided additional books based on themes or genres of literature to supplement my units. *Brainstorming ideas to support ELL learners in the classroom. *Facilitation of district and buildinglevel academic and socialemotional future planning. *Monthly meetings with classroom teachers and reading teachers to analyze current student data to determine if interventions are effective or if we need to intensify the interventions provided (When interventions aren't working, these experts are a wealth of knowledge on what to do next!)*Supporting the evaluation of curriculum for adoption. *Digital technologies for students that the school cannot fund independently (Students use a variety of these for research!)I am concerned that if AEAs are dismantled as HSB 542 calls for, the above support for teachers, administrators, and students will vanish. Districts do not have the funding, personnel, expertise, or time to provide the current services the AEA provides. This will ultimately affect the entire reason school's exist: our students.

Name: Andrea Russell

Comment: To whom it may concern, I am writing to ask you to oppose HSB 542 in its current form. This Bill, which is currently in the house, does not reform our AEA or provide schools with :choice: but rather eliminates large sections of what the AEA currently does to support Iowa schools and leaves rural schools wondering where money will come from to best support our students. The AEA provides critical services, seamlessly embedded, to ALL Iowa students and public/ accredited private schools through professional learning, staff development, literacy and math, technology, crisis management, and much more. AEAs provide support for superintendents, principals, curriculum directions, instructional coaches, counselors, and teachers in specialized and gifted instruction. AEAs seek to improve the services provided to children and families and if Reynolds has a true interest in how the AEA system operates and ways to improve it this process would involve all those involved. Parents, students, teachers, administrators, AEA staff, school boards and legislators should get a say. Every person wants the best for children in Iowa when it comes to meeting the needs of various learners, but HSB 542 will eliminate the biggest support in Iowas schools before any diligent thought is put in. As a teacher in a rural school, we will not be able to replace the services provided by the AEA even with the option to put funds where we see fit best. Student and family needs are always changing, so how can one pay for services they do not yet know they need? Why should we be expected to pay for services which we already have embedded into our everyday lives? How do we build consistency and trust with outside sources who have never worked in a school setting and ensure that we are doing what is best for ALL learners? Thank you for your service to Iowa, and please consider the important role the AEA plays in providing vital services to Iowas children, families, and schools.

Name: Lindsay Porter

Comment: I would like to express my opposition to the portion of HSB 542 that eliminates AEA services. As a member of the New London Board of Education, parent and a tax payer, this bill eliminates many services that our constituents rely on. Throughout the years, my children have benefitted from AEA services and our teachers depend on them as resources. These services are critical to rural districts and losing them would be detrimental to our district, and most importantly would have a negative impact on our students.

Name: Sarah Elliott

Comment: As a TriCenter graduate, a parent of three TC graduates, and a Teacher at TC, I have benefitted from the AEA 13 as a students, parent, and teacher. They AEA provides many services to numerous people, as I have mentioned, and I can't imagine how some will manage without their services and help. For some upcoming units I will need to reserve and borrow novels for my 9th and 10th grades classes. The school, with limited money and resources already, is unable to buy and provide all the students with novels, and I can't ask the students, of which over half can't afford to buy their meals, to buy their own novels. Without the AEA's resources the curriculum and students' education are affected. As if not more important, is the mental health services the AEA provides. They provide training for the teachers, crisis teams for the districts and communities, and so much more. It is hard to fathom that our leaders would even think about taking these resources from the schools. IF YOU TRULY BELIEVE IN HELPING THE STUDENTS AND TEACHERS, AND COMMUNITIES, PLEASE VOTE NO ON HSB 542

Name: Aaron Rasmussen

Comment: I am writing to ask you to oppose the portions of HSB 542 relating to the proposed changes to the AEAs. Dismantling the AEA structure will have profound negative consequences for Iowas education system, affecting all students (general education and special education). The parents/families, school districts, AEAs and the community should have a chance to be a part of this discussion to help collaboratively find ways to improve any funding or achievement issues. It is troubling that there has not been clear and transparent information about what metrics were used to determine any of the concerns the governor raised in her speech, which is leading to a lot of misinformation. Please consider finding ways to fairly and accurately assess what is needing to be evaluated so we can all work together to find appropriate solutions for all. Also, I support raising teacher pay. But, please also consider making that a separate bill as it is needed, but should not be used to help dismantle Iowas AEA systems. If you cut the services listed in this bill from the AEA systems (and therefore a significant amount of support to teachers), teacher workloads will undoubtedly increase. Even if districts somehow find a way to pay for services elsewhere, services will be much more disjointed, inconsistent, and inequitable. Thank you for your consideration.

Name: Allison Martin

Comment: I strongly oppose proposed House Bill 542 and would encourage this committee to further research the breadth and impact of Iowa AEAs on Iowa student and teachers learning and development.

Name: Jon Schultz

Comment: Im writing to please vote no to HSB 542. As a parent of students in the Southeast Polk school district and a spouse of a Heartland AEA school psychologist, AEAs provide vital supports to ALL students. My daughters are general education students who receive lots of benefits from the services and supports that the AEA provides them and their teachers, such as checking out by books and using digital resources like Bookflix. These digital resources were pivotal to their education during virtual instruction due to COVID. My daughters have also benefited from academic intervention groups, with help of AEA staff reviewing assessment data with their

school. These groups have helped strengthen their skills and have allowed them to catch up with their peers so that they do not need special education services. The AEA is important to me and my family. My wife has worked for Heartland AEA for almost 20 years. She is passionate about what she does and is dedicated to the students, teachers, and parents she works with. She often has difficulty sleeping at night because she worries about other peoples children. She does this because she cares. There are a lot of people who work for AEAs like her who care about what happens to children in this state and their education. And as a parent and spouse, I care as well. Please vote AGAINST the HSB 542.

Name: Laurie Butz

Comment: My husband and I selected Indianola as our home because we wanted to ensure that our children would receive a quality public education. Education has always been extremely important to our family, a value we have passed on to our two children. Governor Reynolds proposal, HSB 542, to dismantle the Area Education Agencies deeply concerns my family and me for many reasons. I was raised in Mallard, a very small town in northwest Iowa. My classmates and I spent thirteen years together, Kindergarten through graduation, in the same building. A rural community, Mallard lacked the financial and educational resources to which larger schools had access. In the late 1970s, as an elementary student, I struggled to pronounce my r sounds. It was embarrassing, and an easy reason for others in my class to make fun of me. Thankfully, our district was able to access speech pathology services through the local AEA to help me (and so many others). Nearly 45 years later, I can recall the room in which I met 1:1 with the Speech Pathologist from the AEA. As early as the 1980s, the Mallard Community School District partnered with the nearby West Bend School District, to offer world language and other classes through distance learning. Thanks, in part, to the services provided by the AEA, we received a quality public education in a town of less than 400 people. What our school district lacked, the AEA provided. My dad always said that we received a private education at a public cost in Mallard. He was right! This wouldnt have been possible without the services provided to our rural school through the AEA. Its important for all of us to remember as we explore the longterm and farreaching implications of HSB 542 that ALL students are general education students first! The majority of students who receive special education services learn in general education classrooms, supported by district and AEA staff working together for positive outcomes. I understand from working in the education field for the past 28 years that Least restrictive environment (LRE) is a guiding principle in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). LRE plays a critical role in determining not only where students spend their time in school but also how special education services are provided. Specifically, the LRE requirement within IDEA necessitates that: (1) Students with disabilities receive their education alongside their peers without disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate; and (2) Students should not be removed from the general education classroom unless learning cannot be achieved even with the use of supplementary aids and services. It is because of the services provided by the AEA that students academic, social and behavioral needs can oftentimes be met in the general education classroom, reducing the need for students to be placed in more restrictive learning environments. Thanks to the many services provided through the AEA, more and more students are able to remain in the general education classroom. Isolating special education services from other academic services not only contradicts the IDEA, but also reduces a teachers ability to support ALL of their students. Finally, are you aware that schools WILL NOT receive the flowthrough money for Technology, Media, and General Education Services in HSB 542? Schools will have to pay for these services out of their general fund with no new money an impossible task given their already strapped budgets. I pray you will join me in opposing HSB 542! Since their inception in the 1970s, AEAs have existed to provide fair, equal, costeffective services across the state of Iowa in the areas of special education, education services (such as literacy and math instruction), and media/technology. Our AEAs provide resources that are too costprohibitive for

school districts to secure independently. AEAs resources support ALL students in Iowa, not just those in special education. AEAs follow the standards of service established in Iowa Administrative Code 281 and provide these services to all public schools and accredited private schools within Iowa. Thank you for your service to the state of Iowa, and for taking the time to hear my concerns.

Name: Alexandra Hansen

Comment: As a parent of a child who will attend a rural school in the next few years, I strongly oppose the proposed house bill. I am very familiar with AEA services and know how detrimental it would be for our district to lose these services that support ALL students and teachers. At this point it does not matter if my child will receive Special Education services or not. Losing the support of the AEAs will have an impact on ALL students education. Students are general education students first!

Name: Ashley White

Comment: As a school social worker I implore you to vote no to HSB 542. While I do support teacher's getting an increase in pay, the rest of this bill would devastate the public school system in so many ways. The AEA provides a wide range resources and supports for ALL students, teachers, and families. Many of these students cannot access any other resources outside of school due to a variety of reasons. All students should have access to resources that helps them be successful in the school setting. This sets them up to be successful members of society when they are older. This bill essentially takes away a richer future for our children. It makes teachers' jobs unnecessarily harder and it leaves families without the help they need. Our children deserve to be able to hope and strive for a bright future; however, this bill will take away many opportunities for them that will have long lasting negative impact on their futures.

Name: Janelle Unkrich

Comment: Currently our school relies on the AEA to provide many services, beyond special education, that benefit all students. One of the services we are receiving is LETRS training for all of our elementary staff. This training is on researchedbased reading strategies for students, which is proven to increase student reading achievement. As you might have seen, Iowa's reading scores are in much need of improvement. The AEA has provided us with inperson trainings and coaching which is essential to success in the program (as mentioned in the online training component). The AEA is also providing our school with a discounted rate to receive this training. Without the help of the AEA, our school would be required to pay the full amount and lose the inperson and coaching needed with this training. In addition to this service, the AEA also helps provide resources directly to the students. One of those resources in Bookflix, which is a site where students can select engaging books to read and listen to. The AEA currently provides access to one of the most engaging and curriculumbased science programs I have seen. Without the AEA's assistance in providing these services our students would ultimately be the most impacted. Giving money "back to the schools" isn't going to give us what we need to help our students. Students will have to go without.

Name: Christina Drummer

Comment: I am writing to ask you to vote no on HSB 542. I previously worked in education for over 20 years. Eliminating the majority of services AEAs provide would be detrimental to Iowa schools. Consider all the professional development they provide to Iowa educators, the mental health services support they give in crisis situations and early ACCESS services for infants and toddlers, just to name a few. I am fearful of what is happening to public education in Iowa. Lets right the course starting with voting no for HSB 542.

Name: Sherrill Bowman

Comment: To whom it may concern: I am opposed to HSB 542. I have worked in Special Education for 30 years and the AEA that work with me have been awesome. The services they provide to Special Education and General Education is so valuable and in Southwest Iowa schools could not afford to hire people to provide mandatory services privately. They provide Professional Development for the schools, Mental Health Services, Speech, Hearing, Behavior, Special Ed help and guidance with IEP's, and issues that need assistance being solved, technology help, media materials and the list could go on and on. When we had a student killed in an accident the AEA Crisis team was very valuable and helped tremendously. I'm sure those services are being provided to Perry after the shooting and death of the principal. Think about what would happen without those services being available. The AEA provides so many needed services and is vital to every school district in Iowa. PLEASE VOTE NO on this Bill!!!!!!Thank You, Sherrill Bowman

Name: Cassandra Goodwin

Comment: To Whom it May Concern.I have been an educator for 25 years and am writing in opposition of house bill 542. Our AEA's are vital to our education system, without their services our education system would rapidly diminish. This bill threatens critical education services for our most vulnerable students including, English learners, special education and teacher trainings. I urge you to carefully consider the potential consequences before proceeding with this harmful legislation. Instead, let's focus on strengthening and supporting our AEA's so they are able to continue to provide essential services to students and educators across our community.

Name: Logan Kinder

Comment: To whom it may concern,I am writing to you to express opposition to HSB542. My family resides in a rural community and the ending of AEA would be a disservice to your constituents to say the least. We,as a whole, do not have the options as a Iowa City, Des Moines etc. For some,AEA services are all we can receive, other than driving to a major area. This would add unneeded stress,to an already struggling area, to cut this service. My children have benefited from these services. From reading to speech to counseling. In the times we live, to make ends meet, they are a godsend. I am not sure if you realize how challenging it is to find a doctor who will take on new patients. When a teacher needs help with a student, they call the AEA. When a parent needs to make sure there childs needs are met, they call the AEA. When the student needs counseling after there teacher was murdered, AEA was there. Please do not drive another nail in the coffin of rural Iowa. Thank you for your time.

Name: McKenna Lewis

Comment: I oppose for the deletion or removal of many AEA supplements that they provide. As an educator, we need and use all of the supplements that the AEA provides in our district. They are necessary for our students and even our staff members. I graduated from a rural Iowa school and used the resources that the AEA provided myself. I still do, to this day, even as an educator.

Name: Kattie Lewis

Comment: AEAs are a crucial pillar in Iowa's education system, playing a vital role in ensuring the delivery of highquality education, support services, and resources to schools and districts across the state. The commitment of AEAs to fostering academic excellence, addressing diverse student needs, and promoting educational equity is truly commendable.AEAs serve as invaluable partners, enhancing educational outcomes, providing professional development opportunities, and fostering collaboration among schools. This collaborative approach was exemplified in the partnership with the Southwest Iowa Technical Career Hub (SWITCH) over the past year. Their dedication to promoting student success, fostering innovation, and engaging with the community is integral to the continuous improvement of Iowa's

education landscape. I urge you to continue supporting AEAs in their mission to "Serve Support Advocate." AEAs significantly contribute to improving the quality of education by offering specialized services, resources, and professional development opportunities for educators. Particularly for rural schools that lack the resources available to larger institutions, AEAs play a critical role in filling this gap. The proposed HSB 542, which aims to cut AEA services to three or so categories, poses a significant risk to the quality of education in Iowa, especially in small rural schools. In light of the vital contributions made by AEAs, I respectfully request eliminating HSB 542 and offering your continued support and advocacy for these agencies in the upcoming legislative sessions. The impact of their work is direct and profound, shaping the success of Iowa's students and contributing to the overall strength and vitality of Iowa's education system. Kattie Lewis

Name: Jessica Judkins

Comment: I urge you to vote no on HSB 542. As a former teacher, the services provided by the AEA were instrumental in the success of my students. The resources provided by the MBAEA allowed my students to be more successful in the classroom. As a parent, my children have benefitted from AEA Early Access services and the supports they received were crucial to their development and later success in school. Iowa needs AEAs!

Name: Sarah Dotson

Comment: As a SpeechLanguage Pathologist for the MBAEA, I know firsthand how essential AEAs are for all of Iowa's students. Please do not dismantle our AEAs!!

Name: Amy Pattee

Comment: PLEASE OPPOSE HSB 542! I have been in education for over 20 years as a teacher, teacher librarian, and technology integrationist. As both a parent and educator I relied on Green Hills AEA for support and services such as media items, instructional support, digital learning consultation, professional learning opportunities, as well as talented and gifted, school psychology and speech supports for my children. When my son's best friend committed suicide and we lost other students to cancer and car accidents the GHAEA staff were there for crisis supports. This bill will decimate small schools as it is IMPOSSIBLE for them to afford all the services available to them especially all of the media and digital resources that are utilized on a daily basis within the AHSTW school district. This year alone they have checked out almost 600 items! How can they afford and house the 130,000 items currently available to them through the GHAEA Media Center?! What happens to all of the instructional supports for teachers in MTSS, literacy, math, science, social studies, computer science, STEM, CTE, digital learning and for teacher librarians? Where will they receive school improvement supports as part of the ESSA process?! PLEASE DO NOT SUPPORT THIS BILL! This will decimate small rural schools and destroy equity and accessibility for students and teachers!

Name: Diane Crouch

Comment: I am a resident of Council Bluffs Iowa. I am writing to ask my legislators to vote no to the House Bill slated to reorganize the AEAs. This is a reckless move by our governor to further erode public education in Iowa. Closing AEAs would mean losing access to superior services by highly trained individuals who would be impossible to replace. Through general ed and special Ed services, the AEAs ensure equal access to programs and materials state wide. This would have an especially egregious effect on our rural schools. I am also concerned with the potential disruption of special Ed services mandated by law on IEPs across the state if this bill is passed. Reorganization or elimination of services will cause our most needy a loss of a free and appropriate education, which could result in lawsuits state wide. I am asking for a careful and orderly review of our AEAs so that any weaknesses can be improved upon, not this mess of a bill facing us now.

Name: David Martin

Comment: Having known educators from around the state for 40 years, including 3 family members, the value of the AEAs is very apparent. The AEAs provide resources and services at efficient and technically superior level to what any stand alone district could provide. This is a misguided attempt to fix a good and working system that supports every public school and every student in those schools.

Name: Katie Naert

Comment: I am a former teacher and mother to 3 little ones. I left teaching after 9 years in May 2022 due to the birth of my 3rd child, paired with the fact that I was burning out. I had to take a break from education so that maybe I had a chance to come back to the world of teaching much more refreshed once my kids were older. I cannot tell you how valuable my AEA supports were when I was in the classroom. I taught 4th grade at Lakewood Elementary in Norwalk, and the population I had in my classroom varied SO widely. I often had kids who were close to being identified as gifted and talented, as well as some who were being progress monitored to be considered for special education. This was a huge gap, and because neither of these groups of kids actually qualified for GT or SPED, that meant I was on my own to diversify my instruction. 27 students in one classroom, all vastly different needs. Im talking, I had kids who used their fingers to subtract 52, and others who could use a complex mental strategy to solve a multi digit subtraction problem. I was struggling, so my kids were struggling. My AEA came to my rescue with one on one support with a consultant who gave me tons of WONDERFUL material that could be used to differentiate much more easily. I didnt have time to plan detailed small group lessons for each group of kids. I already had two little ones at home and my prep time at school was often filled with a PLC meeting. My AEA consultant even came in and cotaught with me. She was the breath of fresh air we all needed in my classroom. This is just one small example of the support that the AEA provides to teachers. From the small and simple things like laminating, to the big things like providing curriculum support, the work that AEAs do is SO important. Im not sure if you have noticed, but the statistics of teachers coming into the field and leaving the field are not looking good. Our nation is going to be facing a very serious teacher shortage crisis before long. Taking away supports that will end up putting MORE on teachers plates is not the way to go. Teacher burnout is going to only increase. I know the governor proposes to increase teacher pay, and so I assume this is the trade off nix AEA supports, give the money to teachers, but lets be honest is it going to increase enough to really justify the demands of this grueling job? One that is going to be made MORE grueling by removing more supports? Bottom line. Teachers need and deserve more. They are the NUMBER 1 indicator of student success (just ask John Hattie hes a pretty important guy!) If we want our future in Iowa to look bright, we need to support the people shaping it 100%. Pay them more AND continue giving them the supports they so desperately need. After all, some of them are literally being shot at lets give them the respect they deserve. One last point to share. My oldest had some issues with speech as a toddler. If not for the AEAs early ACCESS services, I know he would be so behind today in his kindergarten classroom. You would not even know he was discrepant as a toddler. He is a bright little guy who loves learning and has only minor speech implications. Early intervention is KEY to student success, and the AEA provides this service for free. Not all families have access to a healthcare professional, such as a speech therapist or audiologist, to provide the same supports that the AEA currently provides for free for infants and toddlers who might need an early intervention. Please, please consider the detrimental effects an overhaul of the AEA would have on educators, and ultimately, the future of Iowa.

Name: Tina Pyawasit

Comment: This message strongly opposes Bill 524, expressing concern about further reductions in a field already stretched to its limits. The justification for the necessity and benefits

of this bill is a source of serious struggle. With nearly 25 years of experience as an educator, I have witnessed a gradual decline in the state of education. Rather than benefiting, Bill 524 seems to offer no helpful solutions and carries numerous ramifications for the educational landscape in Iowa. The pressing demand for increased support outweighs any argument for cutting back on essential resources. When will Iowa take a stand and champion the cause of families relying on AEA services, teachers in need of AEA support, and school systems grappling with limited resources for parents and educators? In a climate where teacher numbers are dwindling, schools face challenges in filling teaching positions, and educators find it difficult to access support for students in dire need, I urge those with influence over this bill to cast their vote in opposition. Say NO to a measure that could exacerbate these issues and hinder the vital support systems desperately needed in our education system.

Name: Heather Applegate

Comment: Please vote NO on HSB542. As a former special education teacher, a former general education teacher, and now a special education consultant I know if this bill passes, the education in this state will be irrevocably damaged. All students are general education students first and foremost. Removing services that do not focus on special education hurts all students. Please vote no on this bill.

Name: Judy McDonald

Comment: As a former teacher and Dean of Students I ask that you reconsider the implications of House Study Bill 542. In a world where childrens mental, physical and intellectual health are at risk, why would we reduce services that have such impactful results on so many students? Why would you put additional financial burdens on low income families having to find resources for their child or transportation to get to these services? Lets put our childrens health first for a change.

Name: Sherry Reifensahl

Comment: Please support advocating for increased teacher pay, but against the proposed actions towards the AEA. AEAs provide such a wide range of services for students, families, and educators. Removing access to majority of AEA services would be a disservice to Iowas students, educators, and families. When the proposal suggest the AEAs have expanded beyond their original intent, that is true, BUT only with the intent of meeting the current needs of the schools! The times have changed in 50 years, and so has the needs of the schools. AEAs have adjusted to help meet those needs for all students, families, and educators!

Name: Kathy Bucciferro

Comment: This is concerning the bill that is going through right now about cutting services to the AEA in Iowa. My name is Kathy Bucciferro and I have been served with my family from the AEA for many years. We have been fortunate and lucky to receive services and have had remarkable results and these Professional providers that are available to our families of Iowa are necessary for the growth of Iowa children. All children are served with the AEA not only special needs children all children at all families please do not support the bill to change the AEA the way it is currently written. Thank you .

Name: Jenna Hoelsing

Comment: I am writing in opposing of HSB 542. As a mother of 3 young girls who have received and continue to receive services (Early ACCESS, mental health support, preschool, Talented and Gifted, and academic services) that are all provided by the AEA. If this bill passes as written, teachers will be overwhelmed without the help of their current AEA supports. This bill will be detrimental to the Iowa educational system and to parents utilizing these services throughout the state.

Name: Sara Sheets

Comment: Dear legislator, I am writing today as a mom of a son who will enter kindergarten next year. I am asking you to vote no to HSB 542. While I am in favor of raising teacher pay, I am strongly opposed to completely eliminating all services for students who do not have an IEP. The AEA provides schools and classrooms with so many services, materials, and resources that most districts work not be able to provide for on their own. Those resources range from digital books, science kits, curriculum supports, professional learning for teachers, digital technology support, computer coding, and helping to create academically and emotionally safe classrooms for learning. The AEAs are working behind the scenes with curriculum directors, special education directors, administrators, and coaches to analyze data and make decisions for the health of the school. The AEA partners with schools to learn together, plan together, problem solve together, and teach lessons together. AEAs and schools partner together for system wide efforts and change that focus on each and every learner in the building. Working in education is hard. How can we expect schools to continue this work without the of all their AEA partners? How many Iowa teachers will our schools lose when we are not supporting them in their classrooms and schools? As a parent, I am also fearful of the many resources and services my own child will no longer have available in the general education classroom. We can do better in Iowa. Vote no to this bill.

Name: Mark Nelson

Comment: To the State of Iowa Legislative body, I strongly oppose HSB542 as it is written. I support the increase in wages for our overworked/underpaid teachers in Iowa. However, I do not support the changes to AEA as prescribed in this bill. AEA is an integral part of the education system in Iowa. Without AEA, our children, our communities and the State of Iowa will be negatively impacted. Iowa has a surplus in its coffers and is seriously considering additional tax cuts in 2024. Why take a program like AEA, one of the best aspects of our Iowa educational system and change it to the extent that it renders AEA ineffective. There is a cost to changing AEA as HSB542 delineates that we as Iowans do not want to pay.

Name: Tina Edwards

Comment: To whom it may concern, I would like to express my opposition and concern with House Study Bill 542. as a single mother, who adopted my daughter as a newborn the AEA was the resource that finally helped me get services for my daughters disabilities. I was having a hard time accessing any services and denied many times without written documentation from the school that she did not need or qualify for help (even with the doctors and psychologist written diagnosis of her). She was in elementary school.. it was only when AEA stepped in that they had to take action that she was able to start getting the support she needs. The trajectory for what my daughter is diagnosed with, and her future is very grim with many not graduating from high school. it is detrimental to her whole future that she continues to receive the service as she deserves & I believe that AEA is a nondiscriminatory source that hold the schools accountable for those that are needing services. Please do not take away the services that AEA offers in and for our schools as I believe they hold our schools accountable, at least that is my experience. To privatize some of the services already offered by AEA, I do believe it will allow some schools to be biased in their decisionmaking of our students needs. I will be happy to explain my reasoning on this if contacted.

Name: Becky Brame

Comment: AEAs are essential for our educational system & the future of our State. They offer tremendous support for our children & parents. Please continue to fund this important program!

Name: Steve Wolfe

Comment: As a grandparent to a child who has received services since birth provided by our local AEA, and as a senior citizen who is opposed to raising property taxes every single time our state decides schools are not a priority, I am opposed to this bill. Although the governor makes this sound like a win win, as she did last year with the ESAs, I have seen nothing in the bill that guarantees our children and schools will be receive the support they need to succeed. As the wife of a teacher, I have heard how important the AEA has been to her and her classroom. There are many other questions that came up this morning at our men's group. None of them were supportive of this bill, and I can only hope that some of the statements I heard were nothing more than rumors. Such as this bill was written by an outside source for a large sum, the governor is running a smear campaign on Iowa's AEAs because of a vendetta, and that this is nothing more than big government bullying Iowans. I would say every Iowan will be impacted by this bill, some to much more detriment than others. Please vote no on this bill.

Name: Megan Kirkland

Comment: Please do not support HSB 542. I am an Iowa educator and parent, and I know that dismantling any part of the Iowa AEA system will have a profoundly negative effect on communities, families, school, school staff and Iowa students. The support of the AEA helps us to provide the needed services to all students. The AEA consultation, guidance and direct services make all Iowa schools better. And Iowa students deserve better.

Name: Drake Brezina

Comment: I ask that you please vote no for this bill. Iowa AEA provides necessary services to our rural communities. They are so important to the success of all students and make impactful results every single day. Iowa needs to start putting all citizens first and think about our future!

Name: Tiffany Wallace

Comment: Eliminating AEAs services would not only put more on the teachers themselves but each and every child. Please tell me how one teacher is supposed to tend to 23 children one on one and work with each one of their concerns/ weaknesses or even strengths in a matter of 7 hours?? I absolutely agree with increasing teachers pay. They are not paid enough as is. I know I personally couldnt do their job day in & day out. Could you? The special education teachers are even more of saints! All the paras, IEPs, each and every staff member is so important for these children. For my family personally, my son has had a speech problem since he started talking however, we assumed with growth and maturing it would go away. That has not been the case. He has now qualified for an IEP and is just starting to work with her. He is SO excited to have this special time to focus just on his speech. He is actually getting excited about reading and gaining confidence back in himself. Without having an IEP and that special time he would start to fall behind in spelling and reading. We NEED these services! Our children are the future of our world and their education and needs should always be number ONE!! We should be supporting every staff member in the school systems, and that includes AEAs staff to help them. I really hope this bill is reconsidered and written in a better form to not cut anything but to add better monetary compensations to all these essential members of our childrens education including AEA employees!

Name: Sean Nagle

Comment: Vote No. Be informed. It is not a coincidence that thousands of people from both ends of the spectrum are telling you what will happen if this bill is passed. What will be lost. How can you not see this? Other than the governor and a superintendent, there has not been much of anything supporting the proposed bill. Also, pay teachers more. You are all adults and hopefully the positions that you have been placed in, by Iowans, qualifies you as a problem solver. A resolution can be found to pay teachers

more without destroying AEAs. Any inevitable issues that will compound in the aftermath if this bill is passed, you will have many voters that will remember how you responded to this bill. But it will be too late at that time and Iowa will be in the headlines for the wrong reasons. Vote No on this bill, be the leader that YOU should be.

Name: Michelle Dickey

Comment: I am a Coordinator at Great Prairie AEA and I wear many hats because we have tried very hard to condense and save money due to recent budget cuts. I am writing to let you know of the support districts are receiving as a result of my position at the AEA. This email is not about me however, it's about the support our districts will be missing if 3,400 other AEA employees like myself are suddenly cut from the AEA system. The outcome would be catastrophic! Title III The AEA receives Title III funding to act as a consortium to provide a blanket of services to our districts. I currently provide this service to 19 districts which impacts 1200 English Learners in SE Iowa. I have excellent relationships with the administration in my districts and provide suggestions and seek feedback on ways I can assist the district with providing Title III service as outlined by the Department of Education. I meet with the DE Consultants every month and we are in constant communication so the governor's comment that "AEAs do not have meaningful oversight" is false! With Title III funding I have been able to purchase professional development books to meet districts' needs regarding Differentiated Instruction, Family Engagement, assisting with proper identification of ELs for Special Education Services, posters to promote databased instructional practices to support ELs in the classroom, and translation earbuds to support Newcomers so they are not missing out on important instruction while they are learning English. I also provide supplemental language learning software such as Rosetta Stone and Imagine Learning. Title III equates to about \$110 a student. Districts with one or two ELs would not be able to afford this blanket of services if we did not act as a consortium. By the way, I would link the Title III page for more information, but it has already been removed from the Iowa Department of Education Website and the bill hasn't even passed! EL Consultant I travel all over SE Iowa to districts to support English Learners and Classroom teachers when they request my service. They typically ask me to come in and support teams of teachers, or observe in classrooms and provide/model instruction that will not only help English Learners but ALL students. I also connect with administrators and teachers virtually via Zoom when they have questions that can be answered virtually. I provide professional development to small and large groups of teachers, which many times is about serving Newcomers because they have no idea how to help students who do not speak any English. I am their lifeline when they feel helpless in serving their Newcomers. Professional Development Coordinator We offer affordable credit at \$35/credit if a consultant is providing professional development on contract with the AEA, which is a huge benefit for those needing 6 credits for a standard teaching license. (If we pay an instructor, we offer credit for \$85 a credit and the money is used to pay the instructor.) We also partner with 3 major universities to offer a major discount for graduate credit at \$125.00 a credit. If a teacher takes a college credit course at a college, they can pay \$350\$500 a credit! So a teacher can renew their license with AEA credit for as little as \$510.00, or go to a college and pay up to \$3000.00! The raise that the governor is proposing is great, but teachers will be paying more for renewal credit. We also offer the Paraeducator Certification courses which help paras who are working with our most vulnerable populations build their knowledge and skills. We are even working with our junior college, Southeastern Community College to use the paraeducator courses as an avenue to build the teacher pipeline due to the teacher shortages in our area! Additionally, we have worked proactively across the state to address the Substitute Teacher shortages. I meet with other Professional Development Coordinators across the state twice a month so that our services are consistent across the state. Courses are now being offered monthly and online across the state for \$100.00. When Covid hit we responded by offering virtual courses so professional

development was not interrupted. I, personally, have answered thousands of emails and helped hundreds of educators, subs, and paras through the license renewal process. Many people walk into my office for hands-on help! I have also curated lists of professional development that would be meaningful to individuals when they have trouble finding what they are looking for. Who will provide professional development, answer license renewal questions, and provide personalized help if that AEA service is removed? The Board of Educational Examiners is great, but they don't have the capacity to serve everyone in the state and they don't allow walk-ins. Instructional Services CoLead Did you know that special education students are general education students first? Our Literacy, Math, Science, Instructional Technology, and Early Childhood Consultants work hard to ensure that special education students receive great services all day long and not just during a 30-minute to 1-hour pullout in a Special Education Classroom. What happens to students who are not low enough to qualify for Special Education, but still struggle in the classroom? Our education consultants travel to districts to provide hands-on support for students who need interventions and provide ideas to the classroom teachers. We are the outside resource that goes to Des Moines to meet with job-like colleagues, attend DE trainings, and bring the information back to our districts when they don't have time to do that because they are spending precious time teaching students! Again, this is a summary of what one person, like me, in the AEA system provides to districts. I have never been more afraid for our education system than I am right now. Please ask a lot of questions like where will the money go when the cuts are made? Will it go back to schools? What will the bill do to the unemployment rate? Why are 20 special education jobs being posted at the Dept of Ed and the bill has not even passed? How will our rural schools get resources and information at an affordable price without the consortium model? How many students took the tests, that the governor is pulling the data from, that she is using to support the bill, compared to other states? We are willing to make improvements and work together to do what's best for our kids. Thank you for not supporting this bill!

Name: Karine Yared

Comment: To whom it may concern, I would like to express my opposition and concern with House Study Bill 542. And vote No for the bill. My children have benefitted from services provided by our local Education Agency, Grant Wood AEA. GWAEA has had a huge impact on my sons and daughters' education and development. My son has been with service for six years and it helped us a lot and help him in his education. And my daughter has some delays. Removing the service for every kid is going to impact a lot of students that need the help of AEA. AEA staff came into my life and kids help us a lot they are caring and supportive staff. Without AEA being with us it's going to impact the whole community. Without the support of AEA staff I know my kids will not get the same services and that's not right for us as parents and whole community. I been with AEA for six years and more and I also help other people in community telling them about the service and help their kids know that their kids matter and that there is people out there that will help and it's AEA. The staff are so supportive and they care for what they are doing they helped us. If it wasn't for them my son would never be where he is now in life. I hope our voices can make a difference because this isn't fair for staff of AEA and parents that need the support with their kids that need those services. Thank you

Name: Stephanie Gibson

Comment: I would like to express my opposition to House Study Bill 542. The AEA is the foundation of Iowa education. They helped us become educated parents, and stood with us when we had no other resources walking into IEP meetings. They help people cope, learn and grow as special needs individuals and parents. Without them parents like myself wouldn't have a SINGLE clue where to start they without a doubt stepped into our lives and changed the outcome of our autistic sons' progress when the odds that were stacked against us. As new parents that had just been told about many delays and possible diagnoses that we knew nothing about. They unlocked the

door to a world of possibilities and acceptance for us. Birth to Three services led to services within our school district. The AEA deserves all the credit, and the angels that work there I cant even put into words just how amazing they were with our child and with us. Any change, dismantling or termination to the AEA and all of the services that they provide would be devastating not only to the children and parents who NEED and depend on these services but it will be devastating for the individuals and their future will certainly not be as bright without this help and these services and connections. These are not services people want, these are services that people NEED. I personally know some of the other families that the AEA has helped and continues to help. To say their childrens progress is at risk if this all comes to an end, is an understatement.

Name: Stephanie Lane

Comment: I would like to express deep concerns regarding Governor Reynolds' proposed bill, particularly its potential impact on rural school districts. I implore you not to support this bill as proposed. Throughout my tenure in education, AEAs have consistently provided vital support to teachers, offering expertise, guidance, and invaluable resources. While the bill claims not to dismantle AEAs, it appears to contradict this assertion, risking the elimination of crucial services and reducing support for all schools. This funding shortfall extends beyond special education, threatening essential services like literacy, math, science, digital learning, and technology support. Analyzing the data reveals that many districts in my area will face severe disadvantages, leaving many unable to support more than one or two positions. This pattern repeats across the state, posing a significant threat to our education system. The proposed bill jeopardizes the wellbeing of students and the effectiveness of our education system. I urge you, as a representative to vote against this bill, ensuring AEAs can continue their essential work.

Name: Stephanie Gibson

Comment: I would like to express my opposition to House Study Bill 542. The AEA is the foundation of Iowa education. They helped us become educated parents, and stood with us when we had no other resources walking into IEP meetings. They help people cope, learn and grow as special needs individuals and parents. Without them parents like myself wouldnt have a SINGLE clue where to startthey without a doubt stepped into our lives and changed the outcome of our autistic sons progress when the odds that were stacked against us. As new parents that had just been told about many delays and possible diagnoses that we knew nothing about. They unlocked the door to a world of possibilities and acceptance for us. Birth to Three services led to services within our school district. The AEA deserves all the credit, and the angels that work there I cant even put into words just how amazing they were with our child and with us. Any change, dismantling or termination to the AEA and all of the services that they provide would be devastating not only to the children and parents who NEED and depend on these services but it will be devastating for the individuals and their future will certainly not be as bright without this help and these services and connections. These are not services people want, these are services that people NEED. I personally know some of the other families that the AEA has helped and continues to help. To say their childrens progress is at risk if this all comes to an end, is an understatement.

Name: Madeline Grothus

Comment: I am writing in strong opposition to House Study Bill 542. The loss of AEAs would be immeasurable. It is hard to quantify what this loss means for me, personally, and for the thousands of educators and students across the state. The AEA provides countless services to those who need it most ALL STUDENTS. Our special education services rely upon a collaborative system with educational services and media services. Students are general education students first. They benefit from the resources provided such as access to literacy and math consultants. Access to resource libraries. Access to online learning systems, print materials and professional

development. This bill will further restrict and damage Iowas education system and the future of our state. Please put a stop to it. Thank you.

Name: Mary Vyverberg

Comment: This bill will irreparably damage the AEA system in Iowa. Raising teacher salaries is a great idea but AEAs should not be dismantled. Please do not let this bill Move forward and impact the only agencies that benefit so many in the state.

Name: Tara Christiansen

Comment: I am writing to respectfully ask everyone to oppose HSB 542. My husband and I have three children who are currently being educated in a public school system in rural Iowa in grades 1, 6, & 8 respectively at Boyer Valley Community School District in Dunlap, Iowa. While none of our children have received or receive special education services, they have directly benefited in these ways and MORE from the services provided by the AEA: * digital learning consultants brought stem activities, such as coding & robotics to students* their classroom teachers, check out book sets for reading, and other classes to have access to a broad variety of books and units and materials* our oldest benefited by participating in the battle of the books with help from the AEA * our two oldest benefited from being educated by a teacher, who made learning science and honing the skill of being inquisitive, fun, and applicable because she was trained by the AEA in science writing heuristic * our youngest son benefits from being educated by a first year teacher, who receives training and support from the reading consultant of the AEA, which helps her with best practice and reading and data analysis* all three of our children benefit from being taught by professional school counselors, who have received training and support from the AEA with suicide, risk and prevention, training, and social, emotional learning and development. Consequently, there is an established protocol and systems of support for all students because of this training and continued professional development support from the AEA* All of our childrens teachers consult with an AEA reading consultant for support and expertise and implementing reading interventions and support across all levels* the district utilizes, technology, supports from the AEA to provide seamless, robust, IT services that they could not otherwise financially provide on their own* Boyer Valley Elementary is currently in year one of specific literacy training in LETRS (a comprehensive professional learning designed to provide early childhood and elementary educators, with deep knowledge to be literacy and language experts in the science of reading) delivered by train, AEA literacy consultants* our two oldest receive talented and gifted services, and theyve benefit from the AEA providing their teacher professional development. Our youngest benefits from differentiated instruction from his first year teacher, which is at his level. This is possible because his teacher receives support from the AEA to provide and plan with best practices for students who are talented and gifted. * All three of our children were educated by preschool teachers, who were certified in preschool specially designed instruction years, one, two, and three from the AEA. This awarded our children, the opportunity to learn in a structured, consistent, safe, environment, so their brains could take on the developmentally appropriate education provided.* our children benefit from a positive and safe school environment as their teachers were trained over a three year time span to implement Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS)* our two oldest have benefited from being taught by teachers, trained and educated by CTE courses via the AEA* all three of our children participated in a yoga for kids program provided by the AEA within our school district. Small districts, even if they are allowed to spend their special education, dollars, that previously went to the AEA as they direct, would not be able to find the numerous positions that serve districts in the current format. Media, digital learning, curriculum, support, teacher, support, school wide behavior supports, school, improvement, support, data, and assessment, support, and crisis support none(and much, much more) false specifically under special education, and would be the responsibility of the school district. Likewise, pitting the teachers against the AEA by adding teacher salaries to this bill is heinous. Continually

defunding public education in the name of parent choice and other excuses has brought us to where we are now. We love our teachers! Teachers do deserve a raise in salaries, but it should not be a part of a PROPOSED Bill, so blatantly designed to serve corporate interest, not the best interest of students, families and districts, especially those rural districts. Vote no to proposed HSB 542.

Name: Karine Yared

Comment: To whom it may concern, I would like to express my opposition and concern with House Study Bill 542. And vote No for the bill. My children have benefitted from services provided by our local Education Agency, Grant Wood AEA. GWAEA has had a huge impact on my sons and daughters' education and development. My son has been with service for six years and it helped us a lot and helped him in his education. And my daughter has some delays. Removing the service for every kid is going to impact a lot of students that need the help of AEA. AEA staff came into my life and kids help us a lot; they are caring and supportive staff. Without AEA being with us, it's going to impact the whole community. Without the support of AEA staff, I know my kids will not get the same services and that's not right for us as parents and the whole community. I've been with AEA for six years and more and I also help other people in the community telling them about the service and help their kids know that their kids matter and that there are people out there that will help and it's AEA. The staff are so supportive and they care for what they are doing; they helped us. If it wasn't for them, my son would never be where he is now in life. I hope our voices can make a difference because this isn't fair for staff of AEA and parents that need the support with their kids that need those services. Thank you.

Name: Sarah Scull

Comment: I am an instructor in the High School Equivalency Diploma (HiSED) program at Southwestern Community College in Creston, Iowa. When I ask incoming students about the circumstances that lead them to leave traditional school, the reasons are attributed to learning difficulties and differences, behavioral challenges, and mental health issues. For many, particularly in rural areas like Union and surrounding counties, the AEAs are the only professional intervention for these students and their families. If Iowa wants to be No. 1 in education like it once was, it needs to invest in people. And that starts with educators and programs that support early access to education and educational support services.

Name: Sarah Meade

Comment: We cannot simply rip the rug out from under a successful system of 50+ years without major repercussions to our students and our teachers. AEAs were created not only to support special education but also to support general education and therefore support teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators as well. This bill was created in opposition to a fully functioning and successful system which the Department of Education just voiced appreciation for last year. Not only will this bill eliminate educational and media services and administrators, it will also vastly change the current special education system. While putting the money into the hands of districts may sound like an okay idea, there is far more to consider. Special education occupations that remain under the bill would be at risk every 2 years when schools "opt" in or out of AEA services. If schools should choose a private company to serve them, there would not be oversight of those positions, not to mention that private medical therapy companies serve patients very differently than school therapists. The amount of money and training that would need to go into these new hires would not be feasible for many school districts. This would also greatly affect our ability as AEA and district teams to collaborate and work with students who may or may not need special education, eliminating the multitiered system of supports that our districts have worked so hard to establish. So, while this bill has potential to negatively impact many educators and important occupations in the state of Iowa, it also will without a doubt negatively impact our teachers and most importantly our

students. DO NOT pass this bill. Our students a flourishing education system and our students deserve AEAs.

Name: Monica Harden

Comment: Although I support the teacher pay raises in this bill, I am concerned about services such as Speech, OT, and PT and what this bill will do to the provision of services to both public and nonpublic schools: The privatization of services if districts opt out of AEAs will look very different and will stray from evidence-based practices of addressing educational needs within the least restrictive environment. This will cost districts more money to hire private contracting houses and these agencies are FOR profit, meaning the integrity of services declines. Without the unique perspective of educationally based therapists, there is no way districts would understand the implications of that choice. This bill negates the progress toward consistency of practice we are revered for in this state. In the state of Iowa: inclusive and focuses on participation and belonging. This is absolutely destabilizing for staff and will only lead to unnecessary competition amongst agencies, private companies, and individuals which will result in a drastic decline in quality of service and therapists.

Name: Karine Yared

Comment: To whom it may concern, I would like to express my opposition and concern with House Study Bill 542. And vote No for the bill. My children have benefitted from services provided by our local Education Agency, Grant Wood AEA. GWAEA has had a huge impact on my sons and daughters education and development. My son has been with service for six years and it helped us a lot and help him in his education. And my daughter has some delays. Removing the service for every kid is going to impact a lot of students that need the help of AEA. AEA staff came into my life and kids help us a lot they are caring and supportive staff. Without AEA being with us it's going to impact the whole community. Without the support of AEA staff I know my kids will not get the same services and that's not right for us as parents and whole community. I been with AEA for six years and more and I also help other people in community telling them about the service and help their kids know that their kids matter and that there is people out there that will help and it's AEA. The staff are so supportive and they care for what they are doing they helped us. If it wasn't for them my son would never be where he is now in life. I hope our voices can make a difference because this isn't fair for staff of AEA and parents that need the support with their kids that need that services. Thank you

Name: Flannery Beals

Comment: I am writing to share my opposition to HSB 542. I am horrified by the messages it sends. Iowa's education system's backbone is comprised of some any integral parts: educators, administrators, superintendents, paraprofessionals, other support staff and ALL AEA staff. This bill sends the message that Iowa educators can only have a much needed raise if they forfeit their fiercest support system. I vehemently believe educators should be paid more; however, this is not the way to do it. Another message that is being sent is, as a state, Iowa does not appreciate the legislative process. The juxtaposition from listening to the Condition of the State address on January 9th when the Governor shared her PROPOSAL to seeing job postings on the Iowa Department of Education that are directly correlated to that proposal two days later before the legislative process could even begin is perplexing at best. As a constituent, I am perturbed my concerns along with every other concern(s) from Republicans, Independents and Democrats alike were so overtly discounted. I am forced to assume our hardworking legislators feel the same. It is not a good look. It was stated the AEAs have strayed from their original mission, AEA administrator pay is excessive and surpasses 5% of the budget and the success of our special education students is the "top" priority. All three of these things are, dare I say, categorically false. Since its inception, the AEAs have budgeted for special education, educational services and media and technology. These three pieces are instrumental in our students' academic and personal success. As for administrators,

all AEAs meet the requirements outlined in Iowa Code regarding administrative compensation. In accordance with Iowa Code, all public schools and AEAs may not spend more than 5 percent of their total expenditures on total administrative compensation. The percent of total administrative expenditures in all of Iowas nine AEAs for all administrators is lower than the 5 percent limit. Moreover, when ranking executive expenditures in AEAs and school districts, Iowas AEAs are below the average and fall into the 3rd and 4th quartiles of expenditures. It should also be considered licensed and leadership positions at Iowas AEAs require advanced degrees and extensive relevant experience beyond what might be required in a typical K12 building. AEA staff are often considered experts in their fields, and are compensated with salaries and benefit packages that are marketreviewed against similar positions in both education and noneducation fields. Finally, the biggest falsehood, our Governor wants to support special education. It is a clear and evident fact, one cannot tell Iowans they want to support special education students while simultaneously supporting HSB 542. The bill, in its entirety, is wholly antithetical to supporting Iowa's students let alone special education students. On a more personal note, I have three nephews who live in Iowa: two are 5 and one is three. Each of them have been successfully supported by the AEA. They are thriving. They will be academically and personally successful because of the unwavering collaboration between educators and AEA staff. My nephews deserve these supports just like every other child in Iowa, regardless of the size of school (public or private) they attend. Thank you for your time and committment to the future of Iowa's students. Respectfully, Flannery

Name: Kathy Wilkerson

Comment: Please do not cut funding to AEAs. This is a devastating plan. I feel like the public focus of this bill has been on special education services but our AEAs do so much more. If your child attends a public school, theyve been touched by an AEA. Our teachers receive their mandatory trainings to keep our kids safe through the AEA. When tragedy has struck our school, the AEA crisis team has responded. Our teachers use science kits from the AEA. If your child has done online research, theyve most likely used AEA resources. Our teachers can check out videos and book sets from the AEA. Our AEA consultants come to our schools and help teachers learn about the latest educational research. For my job we follow the Diane Sweeney model for instructional coaching. The AEA actually brought Diane in to train area coaches. It was an amazing opportunity! All of these opportunities will be lost with the current bill.

Name: Morgan Golden

Comment: I am writing to express my strong opposition to HSB542. As a MBAEA speech language pathologist serving Davenport preschools I am lucky to be able witness and be a part of the profound impact the AEA services have on the lives of many of our state's youngest learners. As a provider in the preschool setting, I spend a lot of time supporting the student/family transition from Early Access to school based services. The unknown of if Early Access will continue to be supported as part of this bill is terrifying. Early Access plays a huge part in many Iowa children's developmental growth and success. The language in HSB542 is vague and does not provide legislators with the necessary information to make an informed decision with regards to how the AEAs provide crucial services to all students across the state. The potential changes and closures of AEAs pose a significant threat to the support system that my students, their families, and districts rely on.

Name: Debby Lara

Comment: I strongly oppose House Study Bill 542 with reorganizing the AEA's and their services and supports for students and their families as well as for teachers and districts. Why is it that the public hears that " we are doing this to help students and their families" but in reality you are taking more and more services away in order to support those families and their student(s). Teacher do need more pay that is a given.

They work tirelessly to support the students that they serve. The AEA does the same. They work to make sure that the supports and services that a student needs is individualized to meet that particular student's needs in order to access and be supported in the general education environment, yet this bill wants to take away the services and supports the AEA's use to do just that. Please vote no on this bill and actually talk to people first instead of deciding from a desk what is appropriate for students and their families.

Name: Sally Slavens

Comment: As an Iowa taxpayer and voter, I respectfully ask you to oppose HSB 542. I believe the dismantling of the AEAs will have a negative impact on all students and will create more stress for our teachers and administrators, even in large school districts like Ankeny.

Name: Hunter Sickels

Comment: I am writing in opposition of HSB 542. Iowa needs all sections of the AEA. Teachers and kids around the state rely heavily on AEA services. My first born used these services to catch up on her speech to ensure she was ready for preschool. Don't take those kinds of services away from kids in need. Vote NO to HSB 542. I'm very grateful for what the AEA has done for my family. Iowa students and children deserve the best care and education imaginable and the AEA has the resources to do that.

Name: Heather Lundquist

Comment: I am writing as a concerned educator regarding the proposed bill, HSB 542, that makes significant changes to Iowa's AEAs, both in function and in funding. I urge you to consider the potential repercussions to our state's education system, especially rural schools, if this bill were to pass and vote NO on HSB542. As a rural educator for almost 18 years, the AEAs have been integral in so many aspects. One area that will no longer be available to me should this bill pass is the vast amount of materials that I have checked out, which gave access to books and devices my students would otherwise not have had access to. Since AEAs inception, media services has been listed as a function required by law to provide. For 50 years, this has been acceptable function of AEAs, so why is it no longer? How will rural schools be able to afford the resources that are being taken away in this bill? The various trainings, professional developments, and resources I have received through the AEAs have strengthened my instruction for all my students, including special education students since special education students are general education students first and always. Narrowly defining the scope of allowable services to special education (and even those services are being narrowly defined) will impact the very students the law proposes to help. How will general education teachers get the support and resources they need to support all their students, including special education students, in their classrooms? One of the talking points has been that no special education funds will be cut and that the AEAs are not being closed. While this may technically be true, cutting funds to educational services IS a cut to special education funding, and while special education funds may be given directly to districts as a result of this legislation, how will rural schools be able to afford the services that are currently being offered through the AEAs that will be outside of the perimeters set in the proposed legislation? Will there be enough private companies to provide these services at a reasonable cost and in a timely manner? What will AEA services look like if the proposed legislation goes through? It seems that even if some aspects of AEAs exist, the level of service will be dramatically impacted due to scope and funding. Of course, every institution should be reviewed and studied to see how services and function can be improved. It is my understanding that AEAs go through an accreditation review as required by law and reviewed by the Department of Education. Was there something in these accreditations that has warranted such drastic measures? Are there other reviews and studies that should and can be done

while still maintaining current levels of funding and services? This bill is currently marked a study bill, and I urge you to do just that. As is, this bill will have huge impacts for our rural schools who simply will not have the staff, funding, and resources to make up for the services currently provided by AEAs. Please take the time to study the bill, develop a timeline for reviewing and studying AEAs while maintaining the status quo, and then deciding possible next steps. Because the AEAs play a vital role in supporting student success, providing teacher support, and allocating resources, particularly in rural schools, I encourage you to vote no on the current bill.

Name: Diana Ehm

Comment: I am retired teacher with 36 years of experience. The best educational training I have received was through our local AEA. A couple of these were Mathematics and Reading methods training. My students also benefited from other programs provided by the AEA. It has been a tremendous asset to my students through the professionals helping facilitate educational plans. I ask you to not eliminate the AEAs.

Name: Jessica Naaf

Comment: I am writing to ask that you vote NO to this bill! One of my daughters benefitted so much from AEA home services as a toddler, and I know many parents who have used the services or are currently using them for their kiddos (some toddlers, some in school). I know friends with kiddos in school who have really been impacted positively by AEA services, especially those in private schools who many not have access to any other support. Please take the time to read all of these comments and concerns that many are expressing here. AEA is vital to are community!

Name: Miranda Thomas

Comment: To whom it may concern, I am a current employees of one of the AEAs in Iowa and I oppose this bill. In my career at the AEA I have seen amazing growth and success in students who receive services and support from myself and my coworkers. If this were to pass and the AEA resources were to change to be smaller, it would have a definite negative impact on our schools, parents, students and employees of the AEA. I urge you to please reconsider.

Name: Bobbi Munch

Comment: To Whom it May Concern, I would like to share my concern with House Study Bill 542. As a foster parent, paraprofessional and now a teacher I have used AEA in a variety of ways, which have done nothing but benefit my children, my students and myself. As a foster parent I was able to utilize early childhood speech therapy, behavior training and encouragement. Without the help of AEA we would not have known how to work with our foster child properly or had the opportunity to get him into 3year old preschool. As a paraprofessional I was able to utilize AEA for a variety of training. As I transitioned from a paraprofessional to a special education teacher I traveled to schools all over southwest Iowa for practicums and student teaching. I saw schools, big and small, utilizing AEA services whether it was help with IEP questions and issues, OT, PT or providing classroom materials that brought lesson plans to life. I am now in my 4th year as a special education teacher and I utilize AEA on a weekly basis. One of my biggest concerns is the fact that schools will be losing mental health services that are desperately needed. Families and students are struggling mentally and there is only so much we, as school staff, can do to help in the school setting without additional support. School staff need the mental health support from AEA, as well as the students and parents. I cannot imagine our school without our school psychologist and therapists. Mental health problems are not getting better, in fact they are getting much worse. I have worked in the school setting for over 10 years, as a paraprofessional and as a teacher, in Iowa. Over those 10 years poverty levels have risen at unbelievable levels. With a higher rate of poverty, depression and mental health issues continue to rise. Teachers and school

staff cannot do this alone, they need and rely on the help from AEA to get through the week, sometimes the day. Please listen to the people of Iowa parents, teachers, students who are asking you to not dismantle the AEA. It will be a detriment to our educational system.

Name: Amy karg

Comment: To whom it may concern,I am writing to you as a dedicated Iowa resident, educator with nearly 30 years of experience, and a passionate advocate for the preservation of essential education services provided by the Iowa Education Agencies (AEA). I urge you to oppose Bill 542, which threatens to undermine the crucial support that AEAs offer to our education system.Having been an Iowa resident since the age of five, I have personally experienced the positive impact of AEA services throughout my academic journey. The AEA played a pivotal role in my small school district by providing vision and hearing screenings, a library collection of supportive resources, child development materials, counseling services, and literacy training. As a recipient of speechlanguage pathology (SLP) services during my elementary years, I am deeply grateful that my parents did not have to seek private services, highlighting the importance of AEA support.In my nearly three decades as an educator, I have collaborated with various AEAs, benefiting from their support through college, textbook access, professional development, and a professional library. AEAs have been instrumental in offering literacy professional development, school improvement services, mental health support, and consultant services in literacy, math, and science. They provide essential resources that empower educators to deliver highquality education to our students.The online resources provided by AEAs are integral to every school district in Iowa, especially in rural areas. Restructuring or eliminating AEAs, as proposed in Bill 542, would disproportionately harm small districts, impacting all students in the long run. The special education funding allocated to school districts is insufficient to cover the extensive range of services AEAs currently provide.As a parent, I have also experienced the invaluable support of AEAs when my children needed academic assistance and eventually an Individualized Education Program (IEP). AEAs provided not only academic support but also crucial social and emotional services. The resourcefulness of AEAs was particularly vital during the transitional services into adulthood, ensuring a smooth and supportive experience for my children.I kindly request that you and other representatives reconsider and oppose Bill 542. If restructuring is deemed necessary, I urge you to allow time for a thorough examination of appropriate data and involve stakeholders who will be affected, including parents. Collaborative problemsolving will ensure that any changes made will benefit the education system and, most importantly, the students it serves.Thank you for your attention to this matter. Your support in preserving the essential services provided by AEAs is crucial for the wellbeing and success of Iowa's education system.Sincerely,Amy Karg

Name: Sandi Sickels

Comment: I am adamantly opposed to HSB542. My children and grandchild have all received services from the AEA. Direct services include Early ACCESS for which my granddaughter would not have been on track and meeting developmental expectations to enter preschool had she not had those services. Indirect services include AEA literacy, math, social emotional behavioral health, and TAG consultants supporting and coaching their general education teacher fo provide quality instruction for ALL students in their classroom. They also had educational opportunities through their teachers receiving materials and resources through the AEAs media. Tis bill is NOT what is best for kids! It will destroy public education in our state. Vote NO to HSB542!

Name: Stephanie Gibson

Comment: I would like to express my opposition to House Study Bill 542. The AEA is the foundation of Iowa education. They helped us become educated parents, and stood with us when we had no other resources walking into IEP meetings. They help

people cope, learn and grow as special needs individuals and parents. Without them parents like myself wouldn't have a SINGLE clue where to start they without a doubt stepped into our lives and changed the outcome of our autistic sons' progress when the odds that were stacked against us. As new parents that had just been told about many delays and possible diagnoses that we knew nothing about. They unlocked the door to a world of possibilities and acceptance for us. Birth to Three services led to services within our school district. The AEA deserves all the credit, and the angels that work there I can't even put into words just how amazing they were with our child and with us. Any change, dismantling or termination to the AEA and all of the services that they provide would be devastating not only to the children and parents who NEED and depend on these services but it will be devastating for the individuals and their future will certainly not be as bright without this help and these services and connections. These are not services people want, these are services that people NEED. I personally know some of the other families that the AEA has helped and continues to help. To say their children's progress is at risk if this all comes to an end, is an understatement.

Name: Pam Vogel

Comment: I ask that the members of the House and Senate reconsider this bill that will completely revamp AEAs. I have been a superintendent in both Iowa and in Connecticut. In Iowa, as a special education teacher, a curriculum director, middle school principal, and a superintendent, I relied heavily on the services of the AEA staff in all areas. This included professional learning opportunities, help with student assessment and data, media services, the professional library, support with all content areas such as reading, math, and science, as well as all of the support that we needed to assist our students with special needs. In Connecticut, I was the superintendent of 7 rural school districts together covering over 275 square miles. In Connecticut, the amount of funding to schools was significantly greater than Iowa, so we were able to pay teachers much more and our turnover was far less. Yet, the regional service centers there were only a "pay for services" entity. If we wanted any kind of curriculum support and assistance, it was costly for the district, usually \$800-\$1000 per day. More importantly, there was NO SPECIAL EDUCATION SUPPORT OF ANY KIND provided. Each school district was left to employ their own School Psychologists, Speech and Language Pathologists, and Occupational and Physical Therapists, as well as Special Education Teachers. While our 7 rural schools did our very best to share these individuals, who had to travel between our districts, it was very difficult to find the staff to fill these positions. We usually had very few applicants. In some cases we knew we did not have the best people in the position, but we had to do what we could to fill the positions to serve students. People in these fields can get higher paid positions and serve in care centers or other agencies. It's those who love working with kids who want to hold these jobs. We spent hundreds of thousands of dollars from our budget every year to employ the specialists who assist students and even help to identify those who do or do not require special education. Lastly, because each district in Connecticut was finding their own staff or paid services, there were inequities in how children and students were served. We cannot have this in Iowa. We have a very good system that has consistently answered the needs of students, parents, and school staff. I urge you to not pass this bill. We do need increased teacher pay, but not this way.

Name: Claire Cole

Comment: To whom it may concern, I urge you to consider voting against HSB 542. While I believe increasing teacher pay is a vital next step to adding much needed respect to an, at times, undervalued profession, I ask that you consider decoupling it from this bill and voting no to HSB 542 as it stands currently. As a former middle school teacher and as a current instructional coach, the impact I have seen the AEA have on all students is profound. They have assisted our district by providing much needed training on supporting the mental health needs of students. Multiple times a quarter, they have supported new curriculum implementations in our district which has

positively impacted core instruction for all students the pulse of any school. The AEA has facilitated goalsetting for buildings based upon needs assessments and helped analyze data to craft next steps to meet the diverse needs of all students. Many of these supports would be lost under HSB 542 and it would be a direct detriment to all students. Please, vote no to HSB 542. Thank you for your time.

Name: Alexandria Cain

Comment: My Name is Alexandria Cain, and I am a Speech Language Pathologist (SLP) for the Great Prairie Area Education Agency (GPAEA). I have served two districts, six public schools, and one private school in my three years as a SLP. Unfortunately, I am not from the great state of Iowa. At the age of 20, my husband and I relocated to the state of Iowa. I was born and raised in Illinois, and I received my undergraduate degree and masters degree from there. I would like to express my opposition and concern with House Study Bill 542. This bill will be detrimental to ALL students in the State of Iowa. Like stated above, I grew up in Illinois and have seen how services in schools are provided, and it was not functional to students. My view of working in a school changed when I completed my school internship through the AEA. During this time, I fell in love working in the schools. I was placed with a SLP whose caseload consisted of complex communicators and students who had medical diagnoses impacting their communication skills (i.e., cerebral palsy, cochlear implants, etc.) . We worked closely with our AEA behavior consultants, AEA academic consultants, AEA audiologists, AEA occupational therapists, and AEA physical therapists. We would meet weekly with general and special education teachers to ensure they had the support they needed for these students to be successful, AND THEY WERE. If this bill is passed, it will only result in districts/ teachers becoming more overwhelmed. It will also result in a shortage of direct services providers resulting in Telehealth services being the result. We need to continue investing in our students, not taking away opportunities for growth and development. We need to do what is right for our students. Please do what is best for the children in the state of Iowa!

Name: Nila Finley

Comment: I am a voter who is against this because it will limit the resources available to small districts like the one my grandchildren attend at South Central Calhoun. My grandchildren have benefited from teachers having access to support beyond special education such as professional development, access to media resources, and TAG supports. My daughter has been an educator in public and private settings in Iowa for 27+ years and uses AEA math, literacy, and early childhood supports regularly to provide quality universal supports to ALL children. Why would we take those away? Our small districts NEED the AEA. Please vote no. Thank you

Name: Angela Jones

Comment: Our public schools could not support ALL students and staff without the AEAs partnership. Personally, we had AEA support in our house months after our son was born. We could not have done it without the steadfast love & support of Early Access. Fast forward to today, they support our schools with endless services. Yes, school districts spend a lot of money for AEA services but districts could NOT afford to pay for all these services to continue. This action is more than a budget cut, its a gut punch to public schools and especially in rural Iowa, we cant absorb this too.

Name: Lynn Cole

Comment: To whom it may concern. I am writing about my concerns for rural districts and regular/special education students! All students will be denied crucial educational opportunities if this bill is passed! Please do NOT have this bill go any farther!

Name: Connie Moore

Comment: Teacher pay is an important part of this bill. I strongly oppose the AEA portion of this bill. The AEA is an integral part of the Iowa educational system. While I am sure the AEAs can make improvements, it is a mistake to throw the baby out with the bath water. Please slow down and make decisions based on data. The current bill does not meet the needs of Iowa youth. Thank you!

Name: William Compton

Comment: I strongly appose HSB542 as an educator as well as a parent of two Iowa high school graduates. Removing services that the AEA provides would mean an even bigger cut to public education. Everything from special ed services, teacher professional development, and counseling services would be negatively impacted. As an educator, HSB542 would just be another wall put in front of public educators to do their jobs.

Name: William Azinger

Comment: I am writing to inform you of my opinion on doing away with aea services. Please do not hinder or take away what our kids in Iowa get from these great educators. Though the governor says the schools will get the money, many of my colleagues who have crunched the initial numbers, believe it will devastate what we are able to offer our kids, especially those with IEP's. The aea services that are being taken away will affect all students in Iowa as many services offered to our regular ed teachers affect all kids. I believe it's just a money grab by our governor to fund her proposed pay bump and create a pool of educators schools can use to fill open positions...I believe that's a treacherous slope to go down. I support our current system of education associations and want you to know they do make a difference. William Azinger

Name: Bailee Burks

Comment: I ask that you please vote no for this bill. Iowa AEA provides necessary services to our rural communities. They are vital to the success of all students and make impactful results every single day. Iowa needs to start putting all citizens first and think about our future!

Name: William Azinger

Comment: I am writing to inform you of my opinion on doing away with aea services. Please do not hinder or take away what our kids in Iowa get from these great educators. Though the governor says the schools will get the money, many of my colleagues who have crunched the initial numbers, believe it will devastate what we are able to offer our kids, especially those with IEP's. The aea services that are being taken away will affect all students in Iowa as many services offered to our regular ed teachers affect all kids. I believe it's just a money grab by our governor to fund her proposed pay bump and create a pool of educators schools can use to fill open positions...I believe that's a treacherous slope to go down. I support our current system of education associations and want you to know they do make a difference. William Azinger

Name: Nancy Cross

Comment: I am opposed to this bill as I've seen how it has helped many children. One boy, my nephew was told soon. After birth he would not talk. As a 23 year old he is very verbal and understandable. Both of his sisters benefitted from AEA services. Another instance a young girl was diagnosed as Dyslexia and she with AEAs help is reading and keeping up her school work. Unlike before when they held her back in school one year and she hated to read, tears and all. Secondly I am afraid you will be losing many qualified teachers as they have to look elsewhere for a job out of the education field. I have talked with some and ask them not to rush. But they do have a family to care for also. I would be glad to talk with you more if you don't understand my concern for our children's education in Iowa..

Name: Taresa Fetzer

Comment: I am writing in opposition of HSB 542, specifically the portion related to AEA services and supports. I have two daughters that have greatly benefited from AEA services. College 4 Kids programming and VAST center science kits have been instrumental in advancing their learning and enhancing their interest in science as a career. One of my daughters tragically lost a classmate this year. The AEA CISM team was at the school the next day in order to support all students and teachers. Without this support, many students would have struggled to deal with this tragedy. These are just a few ways my family has benefited from AEA services. Please do not dismantle the system without adequate research and time.

Name: Rebecca Hays

Comment: Preserve and support all valuable activities of the AEAs. They are cost effective and help protect schools with dwindling resources. It is so much more than special education and it helps schools share the resources and spread the wealth of expanding knowledge.

Name: Dina Brake

Comment: I am a citizen of Marion/Cedar Rapids, Iowa, a former preschool teacher and supporter of AEA services. The AEA was a valuable resource during my time as a teacher, not only for myself, but for the families I worked with. Numerous trainings were made available as well as opportunities for families to get help with speech therapy, behavioral issues, vision screenings, and numerous other therapies all before they started school. When every service except special education disappears, school districts will be left figuring out how to pay for private contractors because the flow through money for these services does not return to school districts. This will be a burden on school boards and taxpayers. This will absolutely crush rural districts. My nieces will be attending school in a small district (Saint Ansgar, IA) and I worry that should they need AEA services, be it because they struggle with something or are gifted, that those services wont be available. My cousins daughter goes to school in Glenwood, IA, a friends son, benefited from services in Riverside, IA and Pleasantville, IA. All of these children attend school in small districts and all have received assistance that didnt fall under Special Education. A good friend is a Special Education teacher in Carlisle, IA, she relies heavily on her local AEA to better herself and to help her students. Special Education is important, but so are all the other areas the AEA provides programs and assistance with. This bill seems to be a response to a problem that doesnt exist. The Iowa Department of Education website praises the current AEA structure. The website says: The Iowa system is widely regarded as one of the foremost regional service systems in the country." <https://educate.iowa.gov/about> I hope that you will give this bill due process with all constituents. As it stands, it will destroy education in ways we can't even foresee or conceive of yet. The AEAs work as educational partners with public and accredited private schools. Agency staff members, school staff, and families work together to help all children reach their highest potential. please help keep it that way! Please vote No to HSB542. Thank you, Dina Brake

Name: Katie Wade

Comment: I am writing to you as a concerned constituent regarding the proposed changes within House Study Bill 542. My mom has been working for the AEA as a Special Education Consultant for the past 6 years. I cannot overstate the positive impact that these services have on the students, and how hard I have seen my mom work to make sure that these students and teachers are given the best possible supports and services that they need to prosper and grow. My mom works day in and day out, often 7 days a week, many hours a day, to ensure that these students have the best people and services on their side, and it would be a disservice to change the AEA and their place within the schools. Many of the individuals working for the AEA are just like my mom, they have their heart and soul in these services and the children.

Any potential changes or cuts to these crucial services raise concerns about the wellbeing of the children, and education as a whole.

Name: Greenquist Andrea

Comment: Please vote NO on HSB 542. Area education agencies are ESSENTIAL to our public schools, and as a citizen/parent/retired art teacher in the West Des Moines/Ankeny school districts, this is EXTREMELY IMPORTANT to me (26 years teaching), my husband (46 years teaching) and to our daughter (14+ years teaching). This matter deserves additional consideration of the impact it will have on Iowa's children and educators.

Name: McKenna Woods

Comment: Please vote no to House Study Bill 542. As an educator, I am always open to ideas that will improve outcomes for students. However, I have many questions about how this bill would lead to improved outcomes for students. Governor Reynolds said that with this bill AEAs will focus solely on students with disabilities. Does this mean any child with a disability? Or only those students that have qualified for special education? Many students with and without disabilities benefit from the services that AEAs provide. If this is about students with disabilities, what about the services that the AEAs provide that benefit all students including those with disabilities? As an educator, the Grantwood AEA is something that I benefit from almost daily, which in turn helps me to provide the best education possible for my students, with and without disabilities. Governor Reynolds said that independent oversight of the AEAs will move to the Department of Education. What does this oversight look like? Are the people who will be providing this oversight experts in education, disabilities, or children? Governor Reynolds said school districts will now control their special education funds. What parameters will be in place to make sure this is done in an effective way that benefits students? Will there be oversight on private providers if school districts choose to go that route? How can we ensure that private entities are doing what is best for students and not just thinking about profits? I think it is completely wrong to pass this bill without providing the public with more details about what this would actually do. What are the real reasons for doing this? Is there evidence that this would actually improve outcomes for students? What other things could be done in place of this that would have a direct impact on improving student outcomes especially for those with disabilities? Please say no to this bill.

Name: Rebecca Hays

Comment: Preserve and support all valuable activities of the AEAs. They are cost effective and help protect schools with dwindling resources. It is so much more than special education and it helps schools share the resources and spread the wealth of expanding knowledge.

Name: Molly Peterson

Comment: PLEASE vote no on House Study Bill 542. As a parent, my children both received speech services through the AEA. My son was identified and received services while still at home. Without these services, neither of them would speak as well as they do now. These services were essential to their development. As an educator, I have seen the AEA be so beneficial in so many ways. Most recently I became a special education teacher and the services provided by the content specialists have been invaluable. As a teacher we cannot possibly be experts in all areas. The content specialists allow us to ask for help when we need strategies, proven researchbased ways of teaching our students. My students have benefitted from those services. I have learned how to be a better teacher because of the content specialists help. I received training through the AEA and the content specialist that I would never have even known about with the AEA. The AEA provides absolutely essential services to our schools, families, and students. Without them, small rural schools will never be able to afford to provide the high quality services which the AEA currently provides and supports. Our students will be the losers in this. If we want to be a top state

when it comes to education, cutting our AEA will achieve the exact opposite. We need the localized experts who come to our schools regularly and know our students. The AEA works and is integrated into our schools in so many ways. We cannot even begin to know the effects of stopping this vital services.PLEASE, do not allow House Study Bill 542 to move forward. Stop it now so our children continue to receive the high quality services the AEAs provide.Thank you,Molly Peterson

Name: Angie Stranberg

Comment: I do not support this. As a teacher for the last 20 years Ive used and my students use multiple services on a regular basis. Teachers, school districts, students, and parents NEED ALL of the services that our education agencies provide. Please listen to those reaching out. Ive used book boxes to offer my students more choice in my classroom, we use the online resources for a majority of the year for students to research in a safe place online, the online classes and inperson classes, printing services, and Ive personally witnessed how great our area agencies are to work with to help students and teachers. We need ALL services.

Name: Jillian Erickson

Comment: I left teaching and joined the AEA to help guide our educators and advocate HARD for kids. As nervous as I was to leave my known passion, I never realized the profession I was going into was my calling. I enjoy going to work every day and being able to collaborate/work with staff and students. Making those connections and making a difference is what the AEA promotes. As a prior special education teacher working with Level III students, I relied heavily on the support of the AEA and its staff. They were able to provide not only the knowledge within specific fields but equipment to best meet my students needs. They helped me grow as an educator and I am forever thankful for that. I am in 100% agreeance in raising teacher pay, but not taking away AEA services. Not only is this vital to my livelihood it is severely detrimental to education and the success of our students. Even as an AEA staff member, I utilize all the services and call upon my colleagues to best support staff and students. To name a few resources: math consultation for specially designed instruction and goal development, professional learning within literacy training for more targeted instructional strategies, collaboration with colleagues for strategies and techniques in behavioral specially designed instruction and evidence based interventions in specific fields. This is just a stretch at the surface for the wide variety of tools and supports from the AEA. As I stated earlier, this would be detrimental to education, school supports and student success. I feel, if we remove the amount of services purposed in the HSB542 bill it will not only impact my work within schools and with students but will adversely affect the state of Iowa.

Name: Julie Duer

Comment: I am sincerely opposed to HSB 542. Every student in our state...general education as well as special education receives services from the AEA. All teachers in our state benefit from consultation and services from the AEA's. All of our continuing education to remain up to date and advanced with specialized degrees will be gone if this bill passes. Additionally...what happens to students that require IEP services that cannot be fulfilled in their schools anymore because districts will receive no additional funds to cover or meet student need? Do those children need to be bussed to the closest school offering services? And what happens if that means hours on a busses for special needs students? And who covers that cost? The district that already doesn't have funds to provide the service?I'm also concerned about how data was collected to determine special needs students are 'failing' as the Governor indicated in her State of the Union speech. Our public schools and our special education services are not failing, but our funding has been continually cut year after year instead of investing in the education of our young populations.AEAs have experts in Reading, in Science, in Math, counseling, and many other topics. These people keep up to date on research and current best practices. When a school wants

advice on what curriculum materials to choose they usually turn to the AEA for guidance. AEAs help districts interpret test data to pinpoint areas needing improvement. If a school is struggling academically, the AEA provides assistance in improving their curriculum and instruction. If a teacher wants to expand her skills, there are hundreds of resources and online classes she can take. There is help for new teachers and new administrators. But under the proposed law, AEAs will be forbidden from offering any services in Media or Instructional Services. All AEA employees in these areas will lose their jobs and all the resources that AEAs have compiled will become the property of the DE. It appears that the money that the state allotted for Media and Instructional Services will return to the state and will not be given to districts. If this is true, districts will have to start from scratch building up this equipment and these materials. It seems as though this is counterproductive. The most efficient way to serve our teachers and every student in our state is with AEA support. Please vote NO.

Name: Rachel Graham

Comment: This proposed bill is not what is best for our students. As a parent of two children that have benefited from AEA support, I struggle with the idea that dismantling/reorganizing the AEA. I believe the services that are provided through the AEA to students (directly and consultative), teachers, and schools is imperative and should be given our full support instead of pulling it apart. Please consider how this will impact our students and our rural school districts.

Name: Steven Lischer

Comment: Please vote no on HSB 542. Area education agencies are essential to our public schools. I have family and friends who will be directly negatively impacted by this legislation. I do not want the tax cuts, I want strong schools and infrastructure in Iowa. Thank you to those who choose wisely for Iowa future by voting no.

Name: Kelsey Baker

Comment: As Principal of River Hills School, one of Iowa's two dedicated special education schools, and a school psychologist with 15 years of experience, I come before you with serious concerns about the potential ramifications of House Study Bill 542 (HSB 542). While I acknowledge the intent to empower local school districts, I urge careful consideration of HSB 542's potential unintended consequences for students with disabilities. The bill's current focus on specialized services risks overlooking the critical, comprehensive support systems provided by Area Education Agencies (AEAs). These multifaceted services encompassing media, technology, professional development, and more form an intricate web that empowers our students with disabilities to reach their full potential. Dismantling this network by limiting AEA support could leave rural districts, already facing resource constraints, scrambling to cobble together essential resources, potentially jeopardizing the educational development and academic success of our most vulnerable learners. Furthermore, the proposed timeline for HSB 542 implementation raises grave concerns. Abruptly shifting to a new system amidst student learning journeys could unleash a wave of disruptions, unfamiliar processes, and employee turnover, creating a chaotic environment detrimental to progress and wellbeing. Therefore, I implore you to engage in a collaborative and measured approach. Let us work together to identify areas for cost saving and improvement within the existing AEA framework, prioritizing comprehensiveness and quality over haste. By collaboratively crafting a solution that empowers local districts and upholds the crucial role of teacher salaries, while ensuring the continued full spectrum of AEA support, we can safeguard the right to a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) for all students across Iowa. HSB 542, in its current form, risks jeopardizing this vital right, leaving rural districts ill-equipped, and inviting disarray. Let us instead choose the path of collaboration and understanding, ensuring a brighter future for education where every student, regardless of location or disability, has equal access to quality educational opportunities.

Name: Sandy Nyhud

Comment: I am a retired school teacher and I have seen first hand the value of the AEA. Please do not pass thus hurtful bill.

Name: Beth Cook

Comment: As a parent of three children who have all benefited from programs and services provided by AEA, I strongly oppose this bill. Please take the time to read these comments, talk with parents, teachers and students to become aware of their thoughts and needs . This bill seems very short sighted and self serving to the Governor. Please vote no. Thank you.

Name: Kimberly James

Comment: I'm writing to you to share my concerns with this bill. The AEAs provide vital services for all students. My children use the media services very often. We access digital resources such as ebooks, audiobooks, and research databases from home. As a teacher, I use the AEA provided digital resources every day with my students. I also often use materials from the print library both for student use and for my own professional development. Cutting these vital AEA services would have a major negative impact on our students! Please vote no on this bill.

Name: Jasmine Zeitner

Comment: Please, I urge you to place a pause on HSB 542. This bill is not the answer, it will devastate Iowa Education. Iowa students deserve better! They deserve time and attention given to restructuring that is based on data and not thought up on a whim with personal agendas behind the initiatives. Please vote no and find an alternative solution, a better solution that ensures every Iowa students receives the highest quality education they can! There are so many better alternatives to restructuring AEAs. Please take time and listen to those who will be impacted by these changes. As a mom, I am terrified for my two little children to enter school age with the way this bill has been written. Please, listen to the constituents! The vast majority are against this bill! Let us be heard!

Name: Lark Rich

Comment: Several years ago my husband needed the AEA services as he struggled in reading. He was eventually diagnosed with what they called a reading disability at the time. As times progressed they learned he had dyslexia and possibly dyscalculia. His mother called upon the AEA services multiple times to help provide resources for him when noone else would. Now we have two out of three children that have been diagnosed with dyslexia. We as parents rely on these services to help our children. Our children attend a smaller school in northwest Iowa. I am concerned that by proposing this bill, it will take away these services that have helped our children progress! My son now an 8th grader was diagnosed 2nd grade. By the help of his special education teachers, who are guided by their AWA representatives, he has been taken off his IEP and put on a 504! Our daughter who is currently in 4th grade has it more severe than our son. If you do so choose to continue with this bill, I am afraid that her education may suffer.

Name: Heather Gorham

Comment: I urge you to oppose HSB542 the AEA is a critical resource that our children desperately need today, and I will continue to require in the future. Lets support our childrens education and give them the best chance to succeed by preserving the AEA, thank you Heather Gorham, Kilik, Middle School, Killick, Iowa

Name: Karen Sandberg

Comment: Schools cannot survive without the AEA system. I just spoke to a friend in the Perry system and learned about all the support they are being provided from the AEA. ALL of that support would be gone if this plan goes through. All ESSA support

would be gone. All professional learning opportunities would be gone. All networks for collaboration would be gone. All media services, resources, and printing services would be gone. Legislators need to understand the whole picture before they act. Ed Services and Media Services are needed for ALL students, including students who receive special education services. It is not as easy as drawing a line and saying special ed falls on one side and gen ed on the other. I think we all support continuous improvement, but please do not make a hasty decision that could be detrimental to students. Take time to study the system, learn how services are provided and who they impact, ask for input from teachers and administrators that utilize these services everyday. I cannot pretend to know all the intricate details of how the legislative system works, so please do not pretend that you know all the details about how AEAs support schools. Slow this bill down and take some time to make the best decision for the kids in Iowa schools.

Name: Bonnie James

Comment: I am writing to express my opposition to House Study Bill 542. The services provided by our AEAs are invaluable to our families and school systems. As a parent, my children had access to AEA speech services, College for Kids, summer workshops, and resources provided by the AEA that their classroom teachers brought in to use as support and enrichment to core instruction. As a teacher of 40+ years, I have had the opportunity to work with several different AEA offices across the state. I have taken advantage of going to the AEA for course training, to make and take supplies for classroom use, to take training on the Science kits which we use as our core Science curriculum. I have taken online courses to continue my education and degree which I then was able to use in my classroom to improve instruction. I have had students who had support from AEA staff with speech services and behavioral support services. I had a legally deaf child one year and an AEA staff member came to my school to help teach me sign language which helped me better communicate with my student. These are but a few examples of the important and valuable services provided by the AEA. It would be a horrible blow to resources for public schools should these services be taken away. The AEAs are a vital part of our public education system and support for our students and their families. Please don't take away these support systems!!

Name: Becky Nardy

Comment: As a parent whose child benefitted from the AEA services and now a grandparent of students who have also benefitted, I stand strongly against the 542. I believe this will make students in small rural districts at a disadvantage when it comes to accessing needed, vital services. These services aren't available in much of rural Iowa except for through the AEA. My fear is that small districts will provide fewer and less timely services. Many parents cannot take time off of work to take their kids out of school and take them to metro areas for services. Teacher support, training of paras, and many other services will be hurt as well. Please vote no for Iowa kids.

Name: Michelle Soloth

Comment: To Whom It May Concern: Please vote no on House Study Bill 542! As a parent and a former special education teacher I am extremely concerned about the future of our AEAs. I have seen first hand, in the trenches, the importance of our AEA. As a first year special education teacher of severe and profound students, I would have quit midyear if it hadn't been for the support from our AEA speech pathologist and school psychologist. It boggles my mind that House Study Bill 542 is even being considered. As a small school district we will be negatively impacted the hardest. Our special needs students will be the collateral damage. We utilize so many resources through our AEAs. Speech, occupational therapist, Alternative Assessment support staff, materials, consultation, I could go on and on. I could not have done my job as a teacher to severe and profound students without my AEA staff and resources. I am a conservative republican who supported Governor Kim

Reynolds. This is not a left wing/right wing issue. This is a special needs issue. Governor Reynolds is going to lose my support and my family's support if this bill passes. Before voting, please put yourself in the place of a parent with a special needs child. Would you want to see their services reduced? Of course not! Please vote no on House Study Bill 542!

Name: Stephanie Edmonds

Comment: I am writing a comment today to please with the education committee to block this bill from advancing. AEAs do so many wonderful things for our children. Yes, there may be issues, but let's figure out what they are and address them rather than throwing the baby out with the bath water. The timeline on this bill is not feasible and will leave our kids and teachers to suffer more than they already are. Iowa Republicans have not done anything to improve education in this state and it's starting to feel like you want it that way. This bill along with the school voucher will hopefully be to your political demise. Iowans are watching. We vote in November.

Name: Sara Russell

Comment: As a 20+ year veteran teacher in Iowa I have seen the invaluable effect that AEAs have had on students, parents, and teachers in both rural and suburban areas. When I started my teacher career the GWAEA provided services to my students that were not available in our district, but they also provided help and expertise to me as a teacher. I had just started my teaching career and was teaching special education, a teaching assignment I was conditionally certified for. The GWAEA provided me with trainings, personnel, support, and professional development. It was also during this time that the GWAEA created and provided a consortium for area rural districts to share ideas and work through shared struggles. This was essential in helping our district and others to best serve our students. In my current suburban district, I have benefitted from countless professional development opportunities and trainings that have led to improved curriculum, instruction, and assessment. These and many other reasons are why as an educator and parent I cannot support HSB 542. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Name: Mark Emerson

Comment: I am writing to express my concern over the potential dismantling of Iowa's AEAs. The AEAs have long been a cornerstone in supporting our educational system, offering invaluable services to both students and educators. The proposed changes are shortsighted and not in the best interest of Iowan's at large. Please consider the well being of your constituents and the role of government in providing services for all. Mark

Name: Mary Anne Kessler

Comment: Please vote against this bill. It does not make educational services better when privatized it only makes them more expensive. Districts are already sharing Human Resource positions, technology staff and other positions to try to do the best we can for our communities. AEA services are already regionalized and nonprofit which allows the to best support our schools. These are not optional or extra they are necessary to assist ALL children in Iowa! They have had comprehensive evaluations, they under go regular program reviews. Legislation that thinks they can cut corners and save money puts our future generations at risk!

Name: Ann Woods

Comment: I am adding this public comment prior to the bill going to subcommittee and a citizen in the council bluffs community school district. The AEA programs in our area have been critical to helping my nieces and nephews develop necessary IEP and ISP's across this area and in rural areas like Persia, IA. Now my family is able to use the Early Childhood access as we test for speech, hearing issues for our preschooler and other possible issues with our 1.5 yr old daughter. If you want to represent the people and communities who voted for you, keeping the well oiled machine that is the Iowa

AEA program in place is essential to keep Heartland., development, and resources as a priority for growing families in the heartland.

Name: Craig Michels

Comment: I oppose House Study Bill 542 regarding AEAs. I think a comprehensive review is necessary before making cuts.

Name: Monte Larsen

Comment: I trust this letter finds you well. I'm reaching out to you as a constituent in your district/state with significant concerns about recent discussions surrounding Iowa's Area Education Agencies (AEAs). In my capacity as a 7th grade math teacher, my students and myself have benefitted from the invaluable services provided by AEAs. The recent statement from Governor Kim Reynolds, indicating a comprehensive review and potential closures of AEAs, is unsettling. I express my individual concerns about the potential ramifications of these changes, particularly the impact on students with special needs and the training of staff on best practices in the classroom. As a general education teacher, I receive guidance from various AEA employees. For example, our strategists are involved in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process helping set goals, modifications, and accommodations for students. Our systems coaches meet with us monthly on the implementation of MultiTiered Systems of Support (MTSS) to help us reach ALL of our students at the universal and tiered levels. Our math best practices coach has helped tremendously during our professional development by helping us set action goals to help improve math scores on the Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress (ISASP). After one year of his help, 10% more of our students were proficient and/or made growth on the ISASP test! Lastly, our SocialEmotionalBehavioral Health (SEBH) coach has helped us implement strategies to help all students feel like they belong at our school: 10x2 strategy, Restorative Practices, etc. This has helped our school climate tremendously after having a crazy start to the school year with the firing of our principal. The AEA provided enormous amounts of support for my school in particular and was an anchor for us during times of rough waters. I appreciate your dedication to our community, and I trust that you will carefully consider the potential consequences of changes to Iowa's AEAs. Our students and their educational wellbeing are of utmost importance, and I believe that, through collaborative efforts, we can ensure a positive and equitable future for education in Iowa. Thank you for your time and consideration. Sincerely, Monte Larsen 7th Grade Math Teacher

Name: Chris Englestad

Comment: I oppose this bill. The hasty nature of this bill raises significant concerns regarding its impact on children's education. It appears to be a potential avenue for diverting funds to private companies. Which is something the govern was caught doing with Covid funding. I strongly urge a thorough examination and thoughtful consideration to ensure the best interests of education are prioritized before advancing with this legislation.

Name: Larry Kischer

Comment: Many of the AEA contributions to the school go unrecognized by the general public but are so invaluable to students, parents, and teachers. For instance school social workers help identify the special needs of classroom students and assist teachers and parents in the development of individual behavioral and learning programs to ensure student learning success. These programs have to be monitored, analyzed, and sometimes modified to reach students learning goals. This bill would eliminate or minimize such student and teacher assistance. Students will be the ultimate losers if this bill is passed.

Name: Brad & Kylie Stroehler

Comment: Vote no, please. Our kids and parents need the support and guidance for these kids,

including mine.

Name: Matthew Peake

Comment: Please Vote No. I am a 42 year Marketing Director who has received the benefits of the AEA. Without the AEA supporting the talented and gifted programs in my school, I might not have began my career as a photographer and videographer. They have a unique and needed skill set and fervently help small rural Iowa school districts. TAG programs with help from the AEA help to influence and change my life and it has not been forgotten. I hope we as a state can pay teachers more and continue to enrich our Iowa youth with the extraordinary work our AEA provides.

Name: Tom Brandau

Comment: The State of Iowa has long prided itself on its high quality of public education. This has been evident in the ability of Iowans to be successful professionals in their chosen careers for generations now. This bill aims to restrict the focus of the AEA to only the special education portions of its charter, and to increase teacher pay. These two ideas need to be separated and debated on their own merits, however they do remain intertwined. First Teacher pay Teachers have been chronically underpaid for decades in this state, and working to improve this is a great thing to do. Even with the proposed pay rates, it will still be difficult to attract quality teachers to the profession if the supports don't remain for educators. As for the AEAs, the work they do has evolved beyond the original charter, but education has also changed, the economy has changed, technology has changed. Expecting an agency to not change is insane and undermines the experts within the agency from adapting to changing needs in the education landscape. The AEA already receive annual reviews and audits which means an oversight of them happens already. This oversight process has not created a impulse for drastic change to the AEA structure. It is unclear what problem is being solved by making these changes. These proposed changes will harm every child's education, not just the special education students. Lets work to pay our teachers an appropriate wage, lets give them expert training delivered by qualified staff from our AEA and allow the educators to educate.

Name: Carrie Hester

Comment: I would like to add to my prior comments that I am in full support, 100%, of raising teacher salaries. There is not enough money that can show our appreciation for the amazing impact that they have on students every day.

Name: Amanda Brink

Comment: In regards to HSB 542, I would ask that multiple parts of this bill to be looked at in a more comprehensive manner. While I support an increase in teacher pay, as I have been an educator for 20 years, I wonder how districts will sustain the increase after the initial year. With the provisions listed in HSB 542, potentially all of our rural districts across Iowa would not be able to provide equitable services. Nearly all of their supports and resources will be eliminated, funding isn't guaranteed, and there will be a large portion of highly educated, highly skilled consultants without work. As the supports and services I provide fall under Educational Services, my position would be deemed no longer relevant. It takes the work, dedication, and background of all consultants to provide the best supports for all students including all special populations (special ed, ELL, etc.) Please remember that all students are general education first, and it takes supports from all stakeholders in order for positive student outcomes to occur. Thank you for your time.

Name: Jere Vyverberg

Comment: Please accept my comments on HSB542. This bill has one good part that raises teacher salaries. They have been falling behind for years and need to be on par with other states around us. The AEA review and downsizing is the terrible part of this bill. I am certain the number of emails you are receiving against far outweigh the for.

Please rework the bill to keep the salary increase for teachers and remove the AEA portion. You need more information from school districts relating the many benefits of the agencies.

Name: James Meier-Gast

Comment: I am asking that you reject HSF 542. Iowa has a proud history of being a state that values education. It has been able to work in an open, bipartisan mode while trusting the deep knowledge that resides within Iowa schoolbased professionals in order to improve education for Iowa students. my wife and I are products of that education system who have made a life for ourselves and our family in Iowa, sending our children to public schools. If the Governor and the Legislature were deeply interested in improving educational outcomes in Iowa, an assessment team to evaluate current AEA services would surely be appropriate. The team should focus on improving AEA services statewide and could include legislators from both parties, a balance of AEA and LEA staff and administrators, and college level professors who are part of developing professionals such as speechlanguage pathologists who work in Iowa schools, and should be facilitated by a neutral organization that understands how intermediate education agencies work. But, of course, this has not been done. I am very concerned that this bill has been written from afar, by expensive political consultants who know very little about how any intermediate education agency operates, much less the Iowa intermediate area education agency model, and who have a driving and biased need to privatize as many educational services as possible. I have deep concerns that bills such as HSF 542 fill political needs, not education needs. Governor Reynolds states that children receiving special education services have continued to lag behind; consequently, their services are inadequate. If ideas such as hers were used to assess patient outcomes in the hospital setting, we could expect that only the surgical staff would remain. The rest would be cut because, following the governors logic, other professional and support staff are just too expensive and people just keep getting sick anyway. HSF 542 is an example of a socalled solution that has been prescribed from afar by a design team lacking significant knowledge about the strengths that are within an existing system. These socalled experts have likely been surreptitiously contracted by the Reynolds Administration at great expense to the Iowa tax payer to produce outlines for service delivery methods that are far inferior. I urge you to spend part of one of your at home days with one or more AEA service providers from your district. You will see how deep, how intertwined, and how complex AEA services are for Iowa children and their families. Finally, I urge you to reject HSF 542. Iowa can do better. And, its children definitely deserve better.

Name: Jessica Grote

Comment: To whom it may concern, We need to keep the many services the AEA has to offer. As a special education teacher of students with significant disabilities I have accessed many of the services that are up to be gotten rid of. I work at AHSTW, a small rural district in Avoca, Iowa. I am the only teacher in my entire district certified to work with students with significant disabilities. This means I am required to plan and deliver their instruction, many of them spending the majority of their day in my room. Some of the services I have used through the AEA include: Special education specific training, especially those for students with significant disabilities Digital media resources I have a student who LOVES Book Flix, which we can access for FREE through GHAEA. Physical media: student materials, curriculum I was interested in, professional books Autism Team Support Behavior Team Support Literacy Consultant I participated in the SWIM writing grant that was made known to me through my AEA. I have watched counselors descend upon our school from all around after multiple student deaths/accidents. The paraprofessionals I work with have gone through training and have been certified through AEA training. Paraprofessionals work with some of our students with the most needs and who are incredibly vulnerable due to lack of communication and cognitive ability we need people to be well trained and ready to work with this population of students SAFELY

and RESPECTFULLY. I have benefitted from support and training as a new special education teacher learning to write new IEPs, laws associated with special education, and more. While my students are typically in kindergarten and older, Early ACCESS services also benefit me because we are able to help students who need it earlier, making significant progress for them a much more real and attainable outcome. Van delivery has also been beneficial when having to send materials to or from different team members I have worked with through the AEA. This list just touches the surface of the many positive and ESSENTIAL things Iowa's AEAs provide to educators on a DAILY basis. Without AEA's our schools and services provided will not run as smoothly and I fear rural districts such as mine will greatly struggle to provide many of these services on our own, even if we team up with nearby districts. I urge you to help keep Iowa's AEAs FULLY in place. Jessica Grote
Special Education Teacher

Name: Kara Sue Henze

Comment: Please vote no AEA changes. This is an important resource for the children of Iowa. Many families can not afford to pay for these services themselves, so these children would miss out on getting the help they need. Teachers already are over worked. Iowa at one time had some of the best schools in the nation. That certainly isn't the case anymore. Teachers spent their own money for classroom supplies. How many people in the U.S. pay for the supplies they use at work? I also believe our teachers are greatly under paid. They deserve a raise!

Name: Ally Willits

Comment: Im here to address my concerns over HSB 542. While the increase in teachers pay is something sorely needed in Iowa, the detriment felt by stripping the AEA is a terrible idea and will be felt statewide. I am opposed to the action towards AEA presented in this bill. Please review and put some thought into this bill. Thank you

Name: vanessa Andrews

Comment: I am a parent of child with an IEP and a constituent I do not support this bill. The AEA needs more funding and resources not less.

Name: Jonathan Nelson

Comment: To my elected officials, Please seriously consider and evaluate the restructuring and dismantling of the AEA. I am an avid supporter of fiscal responsibility and finding efficiencies, but I am not impressed with how this bill was proposed (snuck in), the lack of bipartisan communication (none), or its proposed fast tracking and implementation of July of this year. This type of extreme change to an approach that has been serving Iowa for well over 50 years needs to be thoughtful, strategic and be realistic in ensuring all Iowa children will receive services they need. The AEA provides services to ensure our children's needs are met. The needs often require very specialized support requiring a staff that is well educated and has a heart for meeting the challenges of our children's vast and varying needs. This staff not only ensures children's needs are met, but also provides training for the teachers and parents of these children to ensure children are supported throughout the process. Dismantling of the AEA will create more barriers to effective collaboration, resulting in reduced impact of the services for the children. Stripping the AEA of administration and moving it to the department of education seems like a 1:1 for move and is unneeded. Additionally, allocating money to each district for these special services will not account for the ebbs and flows of the number of children needing services. This will leave districts, especially, smaller more rural districts to make tough tradeoffs between children's needed services. In these situations, these districts may also have to sacrifice the quality of service to meet the limited allotment of money. This bill, combined with the voucher program that was adopted last year is driving our public school system towards a privatized approach that will create inequality of service amongst districts and leaving our children out to dry, especially the children in smaller districts. In summary, I am very disappointed with how this bill was

introduced and the lack of transparency. I expect that in the future, especially on this issue, that both parties come together to agree on a problem statement, focus on common ground and work to ensure our childrens educational future is maintained while also being fiscally responsible.

Name: Shawn White

Comment: The AEA has by far the most experience with working with kids, parents, teachers, aides, administration, and government regulations around education in the state of Iowa. By limiting their scope and cutting their staff you are severely undermining the quality of education that all students receive. Yes, all students. AEA staff evaluate and advise on students that ultimately do not end up on an IEP. They provide continuing communication to the teachers and aides on intervention or education techniques which can be used to help with any student, regardless of their IEP status. That is not even mentioning the physical resources which the AEA provides such as educational videos, packets, worksheets, posters, etc. which all students benefit from. My son is not on an IEP but still benefits from these and I have enough people in my life that work in schools to know where these resources are originating. This is not even touching on the emotional and crisis support that the AEA offers. Who was in Perry the day after the shooting talking to students, listening to their concerns, trying to help students and faculty come to grips with grief, fear, anger, helplessness that the situation brought about? It was the AEA who has the staff, experience, and yes resources which allowed them to do that. We have no way to measure how that might have helped the students in Perry; Or when the teacher was murdered 3 years ago in Fairfield; Or when a beloved staff member died in Oskaloosa last year; Or when a student unexpectedly died in Ottumwa last August. None of the people the AEA helped in those situations had an IEP and yet they were the most equipped to handle the urgency and delicacy which were required. If getting teachers a raise is now a priority then I would suggest that this would be a great time to use some of the \$800 million that was added to the state of Iowa surplus in just the last fiscal year. I would proudly support that bill but I can't support a bill that will immediately and negatively impact every student in the state of Iowa.

Name: Kayla Reller

Comment: Over the years in public education, the AEA has been an important part of my success. From being a special education teacher, 4th grade general education teacher and now an induction coach. The AEA is such an important support for me in my current position as an induction coach.(working with new teachers in the field of education) Without the AEA, I wouldn't get 1:1 coaching, networking with other coaches over the state of Iowa and professional development on growing my practice as a coach. All of these components are important to retain and sustain new teachers to the field of education. We NEED the AEA!

Name: Amy Kruse

Comment: I am writing to express my strong opposition to HSB542. While I support increased pay for teachers, I do not support the proposed changes to the AEA. The AEA system provides equity in support to all districts, schools, teachers, and students in the state of Iowa. I urge you to vote no to HSB542.

Name: Larry McNutt

Comment: First of all I would like to thank you for everything you do for our state and in particular for our students across the state. They are our future and we owe it to them to give them the best education possible. I have spent the past 27 years in education and have some concerns with the proposed legislation from the Governor. We are definitely in favor of raising teacher salaries. Our teachers very much deserve this but how it is funded is my main concern. With raising the minimum salary to \$50,000 and \$62,000 for teachers with 12 years of experience, how will this be funded?. Will the money be a one time allocation to schools? If it is a one time allocation how are schools supposed to keep the salaries at this level in future years?

Right now if our school had to come up with that money we would be looking at around \$160,000 to do this. If the state is not going to fund it each year we will lose school districts which are a vital part of rural communities all over southwest Iowa. Another concern is what about non certified staff such as paraprofessionals. Don't they deserve a minimum salary also? Schools could not function without the great work these employees do for our kids. We are also concerned about the reduction of services within the AEAs. Iowa schools are critically reliant on Iowa's Area Education Agencies (AEAs), rural schools in particular. The AEAs do so much for our kids that is not just special education services. An example of this is when in November 2022 we had a tragedy in Diagonal. One of our students was killed in a car wreck over Thanksgiving weekend. After making contact with our Field Director the AEA was in touch to provide guidance on how to deal with this. They met with our staff the first day we were back in school and provided multiple counselors to counsel our students and help them get through this just like they did at Perry High School last week. The support our students received would have never happened without the help of the AEA. Another example for us is this year through the Iowa School Safety Grant we installed cameras and door access systems in all of our buildings. Along with this we have gone through an intense audit of our technology system. This was provided by AEA staff. They have met with our Technology Director and our administrative staff many times to help us make sure we have the best cybersecurity in place for the protection of our staff and students. They help us with any issue we have and are very good at what they do. This would not have been possible without the AEAs. Now could we find these services through private contractors? Sure we could but it would have cost our school district thousands of dollars to do this and we would not have been able to have access to this. I would encourage the Legislature to work closely with schools and AEAs in updating expectations and changing the funding or structure of AEA services, in order to fully understand the impact on students and schools before any changes are made that will negatively impact services for children that may be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to replace. Thank you for your time.

Name: Savanna McAtee

Comment: To whom it may concern I urge you to reconsider this bill. As a current employee I see first hand how essential the AEA services are. We do great work for our students and districts and are able to show proof of that. All AEA positions have a purpose and meaning. We all work together to provide the best support possible.

Name: Jennifer Cline

Comment: I am writing to express my strong opposition to House Study Bill 542, particularly the proposed elimination of services currently offered by Area Education Agencies (AEAs) to teachers. As an educator, parent, and grandparent, I have witnessed firsthand the vital role AEAs play in supporting and empowering our teachers, ultimately benefiting our students. While I wholeheartedly support increasing teacher salaries, I strongly believe that doing so should not come at the expense of critical existing support systems. AEAs provide teachers with invaluable resources and assistance in numerous areas. Eliminating these crucial services would have a detrimental impact on teachers and, consequently, on our students. Teachers would be burdened with additional tasks and responsibilities, hindering their ability to focus on quality instruction. Reduced access to professional development would limit their growth and hinder their ability to stay up to date on best practices. Additionally, removing crisis support could negatively affect teacher wellbeing and classroom performance. Ultimately, these cuts would jeopardize student success by weakening the resources and support systems available to educators. Increasing teacher salaries is essential, but it must be done responsibly without sacrificing the vital support our educators need to thrive.

Name: Jenna Sneed

Comment: Please vote no on HSB 542. ALL of the services provided by the AEA are important

in serving and meeting the needs of students across Iowa. Without the critical foundation of the AEA, students, families, and staff will pay the price if this bill passes.

Name: Abbie Steines

Comment: Please oppose HSB 542. I am very supportive of increasing teachers wages. I am not in support of the proposed actions to the AEA. They do so much for our communities with the services they offer. We need them!

Name: Ellen Plath

Comment: Iowa needs AEAs!! They provide ESSENTIAL services in smaller communities. They are necessary for special education and many other things that a single small district cannot afford on its own. I am totally against any move to dismantle AEAs. They are a large part of Iowas educational system.

Name: Laura Holstein

Comment: As a parent of three children who attend a rural school district I have great concern how the proposed cuts would affect the teachers, administrators, and students in our district. My youngest child has received services through the AEA for his speech impairment and we have nothing but praise for his Speech Pathologist and the AEA she works for. Without the support from the state to these AEAs, I have concern with how these services and other programs the AEA provides would be supported by smaller school districts.

Name: Becky Jefford

Comment: My name is Becky Jefford. I was born in a small town in Iowa and have lived in Iowa my entire life. I am a mother. I am an educator. I am scared. I have been in education for more than 27 years and plan on working in education until I retire. Why am I writing this? I am scared. What is being proposed regarding Iowas Area Education Agencies is something I cannot wrap my head around. The enormous impact these changes would have on SO MANY children and families is indescribable. I could name a thousand reasons why this bill should not pass. I would welcome the opportunity to voice those. I am lucky to get to work for the AEA. I am lucky my family has access to all of the services and support I know they offer. But most of all, I am scared for my students, my children, my fellow educators and friends. Rural communities will feel the greatest impact and through no fault of their own, Iowan children, especially those from those wonderful small Iowa towns, will suffer as a result. Please, do not let this bill pass. It is too important and it is NOT what is best for Iowa.

Name: Todd Gassman

Comment: All three of my sons have used special Ed services provided by the AEA. As I read some of house bill 542 it is clear that her only goal is to end the AEAs for a cheaper and less affective alternative. If the governor gets this bill passed it will end checks and balances with special ed services. When districts hire their own staff to evaluate kids and put plans in place we will lose the impartiality with a third party. Thank you for your time. Hopefully you will vote no on this terrible bill.

Name: Nancy Sudmann

Comment: Please consider vote against this HSB 542z. This bill would have a HUGE impact on all of our Iowa schools, teachers, and students.

Name: Tom & Patty Daniel

Comment: We are writing in support of the professional women and men of the AEA who provide a wide array of services to students in every Iowa school. The expectations and demands of the of AEA employees compared to what employees would receive from a third party (forprofit) company would be night and day. The level of

expertise, professional development opportunities, and specialized team support that the AEAs provide is second to none. We support the AEAs and all they do to help students, families, and schools be the best they can be.

Name: Emily Krist

Comment: As an educator and a parent in the state of Iowa, I cannot stress the importance of the AEA enough. I rely on them daily as a school counselor for help with students with IEPs, students with disabilities, and general education students. The AEA funds social workers, consultants, and so many more people and resources for our schools. Without their support, all students would be without vital resources that they need. In addition, as a parent I used the AEA for my daughter who needed physical therapy as a 6 month old due to torticollis and being delayed developmentally. Without these early intervention services, we would have paid \$300 a week because our insurance did not cover most of the PT. This is not something we could afford nor most families in the state of Iowa could afford without AEAs services. Without this PT, my daughter would still be developmentally delayed. Please consider speaking to educators and AEA staff members to see how vital their resources are. Our public schools cannot afford to lose even more resources when we are already stretched so thin. This bill will hurt the people and children of Iowa greatly.

Name: Renee Kettwick

Comment: The AEA provides so many services for the children of Iowa and our teachers. Please vote NO on this bill. I am very concerned about the proposed cuts to area education agencies. AEA provides valuable academic, behavioral, and social emotional support to students and staff in my school. They offer quality, meaningful professional development to all school staff. Students are struggling in all schools with school shootings and world concerns. Don't take valuable resources away from schools. Please vote No!

Name: Jon Cleveland

Comment: I'm writing to oppose the passing of HSB 542. AEAs have supported my family in many ways. My son who is 7 was identified at birth with severe and profound hearing loss. The AEAs have guided us through our journey. In December, our son (who does not have an IEP) received a cochlear implant. AEA staff has spent a significant amount of time working with staff at his school to maximize the benefits of his cochlear implant. Because of their dedication, he is doing better than we could have imagined. I know that without the AEA we would not have achieved the success we have in just 45 days. The point is, teachers have the resources they need to help kids who need it. Passing HSB 542 limits even more the resources available to teachers. The job of a teacher is hard enough. Taking away resources with no identifiable way to care for the children affected by them is NOT a good idea. Thank you, Jon Cleveland

Name: Jennifer Appel

Comment: I would like to express my opposition to the House Study Bill 542. Every day I witness just how valuable both the special education and general education support provided by the AEA is to the administrators, the teachers, the students, and the parents. For the past 15 years, I have worked directly with general and special education teachers, general education students, students who require special education support, and families. I not only provide special education support services but regularly access general education support provided through the AEA (loan library for assessments and materials, media center for my students assistive technology needs, professional development so I provide the most effective instruction to students, and the general education AEA professionals who have been an irreplaceable source of information. General education and special education are a unit and work cohesively as one. In order for general education and special education to work efficiently and effectively as one, the general education supports provided by

the AEA need to remain. As the bill stands schools will not receive funding to replace the following AEA general education support: specialty support (traumatic brain injury team, assistive technology, behavior team), curriculum consultation/teams (literacy, math, science, social studies, talented & gifted), preschool teacher and parent support, support for our English language learner teachers and parents, computer science, mentoring and induction, professional development, future readiness, wellbeing consultation and support, school improvement team, digital learning, IT team, and van drivers just to name a few. This will have a detrimental impact on schools, especially those in smaller districts. I encourage you to personally reach out to your local teachers and administrators. I'm sure they would be happy to speak with you regarding how they utilize AEA services. Working with children is a job of immense passion and love for our youth. We truly want to better the lives of the little people we work with on a daily basis. Please consider the children and the expertise of the individuals who have the privilege of living this every day.

Name: Jennifer Lorence

Comment: Please do not support HSB 542. As a speech language pathologist serving 3 rural school districts, this bill does not give choices to school districts, but takes them away. Rural schools will not be able to find alternative resources, nor will they be able to pay for the things they need, such as classroom materials, printing, crisis team services, hearing screenings, etc, etc, etc that the AEAs have always provided. Vote no on this bill!

Name: Kelli Finken

Comment: I would like to express my opposition to House Study Bill 542. I am a teacher, but foremost a mother. While our AEA has been vital to my job as a teacher, their help with my son has meant so much more to me personally. My son has a severe form of ADHD and it is something we have been working to treat since he was 5, he is now almost 9. We have met with multiple AEA specialists along his educational journey, most notably psychologists, therapists, and occupational therapists. He is considered "twice exceptional" both academically gifted and has a learning disability in the form of his ADHD. His academic career has been hard but not nearly as difficult as it would be without our amazing school psychologist who has lead us through inclass supports, to a 504 plan, and to an IEP this year. He has also seen an inschool therapist provided by the AEA to ensure that he is not missing out on instructional time but is still able to work through some of his emotional regulation issues. Without these AEA professionals, my school would have to outsource and pay out of pocket (which would probably end up out of my pocket) for the psychologists' referrals, therapist time, and occupational therapist appointments. All of this would result in lost academic time and increased out of pocket expenses for your Iowa schools and those who utilize the public education system. Consider the burden this would put on families who are already struggling financially... They would not be able to go to outside sources for these professionals and their children would slip through cracks, perpetuating the cycle of poverty. There is not an educator out there who can say they don't utilize the AEA. Whether they know it or not, there is not a parent out there whose child hasn't been aided by an AEA professional in some way in front or behind the scenes. To remove their privileges or limit their help in the public school system would be a detriment to the public schools, especially the rural public schools, of Iowa more than you realize. It is not a choice that someone with the best intentions for Iowa children would make.

Name: Amanda Bowie

Comment: I oppose this House Bill as an educator and as a parent. AEA employees are not recognized enough for all the good that they do for students, families, schools, and communities. As an educator, AEA staff members have been valuable colleagues with professional development, special education support, classes for educators, training on mental health for students, etc. Iowa schools would definitely suffer

without our AEAs.

Name: Nancy Hansen

Comment: The AEA is such an important need for schools. The students that you will affect, Willie detrimental. Please hear us!

Name: Emily Hollingsworth

Comment: To whom it may concern, I am writing as a concerned AEA employee and a parent whose children utilize AEA resources in the general education program and TAG services. This bill will negatively impact and affect ALL children, ALL teachers, and rural schools who will not have the means or resources to meet all learner's needs. Sure, AEAs have evolved and changed over the last 50 years, but let's be honest, what hasn't changed? If you want to see change and higher test scores, eliminating and dismantling the AEA is not the answer. Providing ALL parts of the AEA is key and one piece of the puzzle for the success of students. Please, Please, Please vote NO to bill 542! This bill is not the answer.

Name: Liz Del Castillo

Comment: Good afternoon, As a school psychologist, parent, voter, and Iowan who is passionate about our public schools and the future of our state, I am writing to share my concerns with HSB 542. I want to begin by addressing some of the concerns that have been expressed by the governor, and the few republican legislators who have responded to me as of today. AEAs do have accountability. They have boards, just like our local schools. The board consists of individuals who were voted on, by the districts we serve. That allows for local control, and guidance around what is important to our local schools. Additionally, they have gone through accreditation, and site visits. The most recent reports are public record, and they have been a glowing review of the supports we provide, efficiently and in a cost effective manner. Special Education has an additional level of accountability: federal law and due process. When or if parents become unhappy with services and supports, they have a right to file due process. Iowa has the 3rd lowest rate of due process cases in the nation. Special Education as separate. The governor has said that the AEAs have expanded their mission, and were only intended to meet the needs of special education students. First, that is not true. Media and Educational Supports have been a part of the mission from the beginning. To understand why you need to understand special education really well. Good news, that's my whole job. Special education can not be a separate entity, because all special education students are general education students first. No matter their specific needs, they continue to engage in core in one form or another. Less than 1% of your student body is excluded from this requirement. Approximately 1215% of the student population is identified for special education services, so they are in general education classrooms, a lot. Quality core instruction is good for ALL students, including special education students. Federal law requires that special education students be educated in the Least Restrictive Environment possible. This means that they are in classes with nondisabled peers to the maximum extent possible. This is because we know through extensive research that student outcomes are far superior when they are taught in inclusive settings. Iowa is a Response to Intervention state (RTI). This means that evaluation and eligibility for special education requires multitiered systems of support (MTSS). Before determining that a student is not making progress because of a disability, we must try effective, evidence based interventions to see if any skill gaps can be addressed in this way. Once again, core structures are vital to the process, and to finding appropriate supports. Special education isn't magic, no matter how students get there we need data to determine what works. I am highly qualified to determine special education eligibility, and to support MTSS systems, behavior and mental health, and to look at and evaluate data but I am much better at my job when I have a team of professionals and experts that I can call on. Without the network and structure that the AEA has provided (through ed services, media, and tech), you will need a lot more individuals with specialized training to do what I do now. Iowa has a

shortage of school psychologists, as do many other states. Reform There is no perfect system. The AEAs have all shared that they are open to having conversations about the current structure. I don't know about all the financials of my organization I don't have time for that. However, I do know that numbers can be manipulated. If the concern is really about money, then let's get all the data out on the table. AEAs have to align to state funding criteria for administrators, so who was counted as an administrator? Where did the numbers come from? If things are in need of change, let's do it intentionally. All good program evaluation starts with resource mapping and identifying needs. It also requires that ALL stakeholders are part of the conversation. Why hasn't that happened? If the goal really is reform, why was everything so secretive? Why such a short timeline? Who authored this bill? Small schools My two sons attend a rural public school. They likely don't even know the kinds of supports that they have received from the AEAs. They both qualified for the talented and gifted program, which means their teachers had access to AEA specialists in TAG education. They have used many, many of the digital resources that are available through the AEA (BookFlix, MackinVIA, many audiobooks, models, science kits, battle of the books, and so much more). Many of these resources would not be financially feasible in their small school. Crisis response: My small, local school experiences tragedy this month when a student died. Crisis response was there. Crisis response was there in Perry, too. These individuals are highly trained and know just how to jump in and support families, students, and teachers. Who will support these needs in the future? Please take the time to understand the current AEA system. There are amazing things happening every day. Could we stand to make some improvements? Probably. No one opposes careful study and proactive conversations. Please reach out to superintendents, teachers, administrators, and parents. Ask them about the ways that the AEAs have supported them. Ask how this bill will impact them. Listen to the people serving in the local schools. The AEAs are willing to engage in these conversations, are you?

Name: April Balm

Comment: Education is a difficult job, regardless what aspect of education you consider. The AEA has served and continues to serve the families and students of Iowa, providing fresh insight, fantastic professional development opportunities, and even in-home services from birth to 3. It is extremely short-sighted to consider removing such an impactful part of what Iowa education has been for generations.

Name: Pamela Miller-DeKeyser

Comment: I have been a teacher since 1990. After graduating from U of I, I moved to Las Vegas to teach because at that time Iowa was well-known for its wonderful schools and it was hard to find a teaching job because there were 200 applicants for every available job. I taught in Vegas for 10 years without any support from entities like AEA. I was expected to teach units on magnets, telling time and reading in general without magnets, clocks or books. I ended up moving back to Iowa and was eventually lucky enough to find a teaching job at a public school. We had a lot of support from AEA on aligning our standards, professional development, and providing support to teacher to meet the needs of ALL of our students. I borrowed many books and materials, have taken classes to make me a better teacher, and have worked closely with experts in speech, occupational therapy and psychology to help me be a better teacher to my students and to better meet their needs. I am at a private school now, but still know the valuable resources and expertise provided by AEA personnel. I have met with experts to help identify students who may need special ed services. They have given me suggestions on what I can do to help them become better readers. I have checked out books to use with my reading students. I have met with the speech therapist to find out when and how to correct my students who have speech issues. We met with a technology expert to help support our school-wide professional goal of implementing more technology in our lessons. There is not enough time or room to tell how vital AEA people and services are in meeting the needs of all students in schools. To disband AEAs would be a travesty and

something Iowans would regret for years to come. Teacher pay most definitely should be raised across the board in order to attract and retain teachers in Iowa, however getting rid of AEAs would only add to the mass exodus of teacher from our state. Raise teacher pay AND keep AEA!!

Name: Mandi King

Comment: The children that benefit from AEA knowledge and support, particularly those in rural communities, cannot afford to have AEA services cut or to have them privatized. Yes, teachers deserve a pay increase, but they also deserve to continue to have the resources that AEA provides them, and thereby their students, as well. The wellbeing of Iowas children must not be set on the fulcrum of corporate greed. Public school children and teachers need this support. Iowa, as a whole, will benefit from these services.

Name: Rose Naumann

Comment: Please vote no to this bill. AEAs help all students. When general education is strengthened for all students, less students require special education services. The AEA helps to make sure that IEPs are compliant with state mandates. Iowa has had a strong education system for years and been at the forefront of educational research. A large part of this research has been completed with the help of the AEA meaning Iowa AEAs not only strengthen Iowa students' education, but the education for all students in the United States. AEAs are so very important.

Name: Larry Kischer

Comment: Many of the AEA contributions to the school go unrecognized by the general public but are so invaluable to students, parents, and teachers. For instance school social workers help identify the special needs of classroom students and assist teachers and parents in the development of individual behavioral and learning programs to ensure student learning success. These programs have to be monitored, analyzed, and sometimes modified to reach students learning goals. This bill would eliminate or minimize such student and teacher assistance. Students will be the ultimate losers if this bill is passed.

Name: Sarah Baker

Comment: Please vote no to the changes to the AEA. As a teacher, our districts use all of the resources our AEA has to offer. Because of the AEA, we as teachers are able to have supplies and resources at no cost out of our personal income to have for our students. The AEA provides services for us to be successful throughout the school year, and our AEA representatives are constantly there for support for all students. My district has used their services not only for academics and special education services, but to create materials to help our students learn, so we do not have to create them during planning or outside contract time. We are able to use our time more effectively and focus on our kids because of what the AEA provides. We use the AEA for our annual trainings and other trainings to continue our education for our licensure at no or little cost to us. The AEA provides programs to deliver materials for us to use that we cannot afford, to have them in the hands of our students. When I was a new teacher, I used their programs for my students to have books in their hands before I could build my classroom library. My first year as a teacher, we took a tour of our local AEA to see what resources they have for us. The heart, support, and genuine love our AEA has for our schools, our teachers, and our students is just another reason to keep all of our resources the AEA provides. Our AEAs are more people in our student's corner to help them succeed.

Name: Trinity Weers

Comment: As an Iowa graduate, a 7th grade teacher, a daughter of Iowa educators, a granddaughter of Iowa educators, and a woman who cares deeply about student success, I strongly oppose the dismantling of the AEA. Because that is what this is.

A dismantling. Attempting to convince us that a so-called "reorganization" is anything other than a disgraceful elimination of NECESSARY funds and services for Iowa's students is outright dishonesty. AEA is not only beneficial, but critical. Think of Perry. If Iowa truly cares about what happened there, they will not rob schools and students of the counselling and care that AEA has promised districts for 50 years. If there is to be any hope for Iowa's education system, this bill cannot pass.

Name: Barb Middendorf

Comment: To the Honorable Education Committee, I have been in education for almost 50 years and have worked with the dedicated AEA personnel and have relied on their expertise in areas where I needed support. I am fearful if this passes that education will lose all standardization for what is accountable from one district to the next. It will turn into a hodge podge mess. The framework of the AEA has been outstanding and it is truly the backbone to support all students and parents in Iowa. Private and Public all deserve these services. The dynamics of the population in Iowa has changed since I started 45 years ago. There is more need than ever for services from the AEA. Just look at our communities. Special Ed is only increasing. Parents need this support from birth to high school. Please oppose this bill. It is not in the best interest of education in the state of Iowa. Please do not hoard taxes at the expense of education so corporations can have lower taxes. Protect the students in Iowa and the families that need the support of our AEA.

Name: Melissa Nielsen

Comment: I would like to reach out to you as a principal. I am in my 13th year in education and my second as the principal. Not a single year has gone by in my job that I have not utilized Green Hills AEA for support or training. They did my mentor training my first two years in education to help guide me in understanding the Iowa Teaching standards in a deeper way. I have had many professional developments led by AEA personnel and have collaborated with them to plan and coordinate PD plans. My teachers have received coaching from AEA in reading, math, and special ed consultants to help guide them down the right path and make sure they are reaching the Iowa Core standards along with using their data to make the right decisions. I took a risk and became a TLC coach for 6 years at East Mills a new idea that had to be implemented in Iowa. I enjoyed my six years as a coach but highly utilized the AEA to guide myself and other coaches across the state with what coaching models to use. I utilized many AEA staff members to help me better understand how to dig into my schools data, performance profile report, special ed, reading intervention, challenging behavior, and so much more. Now as a principal I see how helpful these services are for my staff as we don't have people hired in our school district to do the jobs that they provide. As a small school district we can't afford to provide a full time coach for each subject area or a full time data coordinator. In small school districts a typical teacher is already doing so much more than the average teacher to make sure we are meeting criteria for the state and doing the best for our students. One area that really concerns me is that Iowa doesn't enforce universal 3 year old preschool. Early Access makes it possible for the AEA to work with students under 3 years old and get them the correct help, home visits, guide parents, get partnerships set up, and get them in a preschool program to get their educational needs met. If this service gets taken away then we are going to have many students show up between the ages of 46 years old very far behind emotionally, socially, and academically. It will then be up to the classroom teacher and school district to put a plan in place for these students and they will be even further behind or need to be held back in order to catch up. Students in Iowa aren't even required to do kindergarten so these kids could show up in 1st grade with so many needs but never have received any assistance. Did you know a 1st grader is supposed to read at least 70 words a minute by the end of the school year? This is going to make our state's reading scores decrease even more. The earlier a student gets help with their academic, behavior, and emotional needs the better off they will have skills to help them in the long run. The state is also now offering LETRS training for free, guess what? My staff has

already accomplished this training because the AEA brought it to us first as a good initiative for our teachers to learn to be better literacy teachers. Have you noticed how fast AI has taken off? The AEA is already coming up with training to help teachers better understand this and how to watch for it in the classroom. I have a student attending Rising Hope Academy in Red Oak, he cannot handle a normal school, he needs deeper therapeutic help than we can offer. This is provided by the AEA. Is the state going to create more behavior schools for these students? I currently have 2 paras and in the past have had others use the AEA for para certification, is the state going to offer these training? Schools also don't have the money to buy every little resource or supplies they may need to have successful classrooms so my teachers utilize the AEA's digital resources, library, and kits that teachers can borrow to bring into their lessons. Are you going to give schools more money to buy these things? Please think about all of the things our AEAs provide to our school districts in the state, especially the small school districts. It isn't going to make Iowa's education better by cutting so many services that the AEA provides, it is going to put more stress on districts to find these supports or put more on classroom teacher's shoulders to learn. We already have a shortage of teachers, we don't need more reasons to lose teachers due to removing some of their support.

Name: Julie Rinker

Comment: Please leave our AEAs alone. You will hurt young Iowans. As a lifelong Iowan, our students need these services to remain as is.

Name: Annette Clarahan

Comment: I am writing this out of concern for our kids and our schools. I am a mom who had boy's with IEP's. Now I am a grandma who's very concerned. I've been on all three sides of this issue, as a Mom, Para in the school district, and the AEA. How can we simply stop providing important services that our vital to our kids and schools, (Literacy Consultants, Math Consultants, Science Consultants Assistive Technology, Social Emotional Behavioral and Mental Health, English Language Learners, Professional Learning, Talented & Gifted, Regional Directors, Media & Print Shop)? And on the other hand, while dumping Special Education in their lap with the responsibility of organizing and paying entities for services with less money and no time. The flow through dollars will not be there. All of the above services will need to be provided if it's written in an IEP with NO NEW MONEY to replace what was taken away. Districts will have to pay out of there current fund, which in my opinion, have been terribly low, and getting lower each year. I am all for a pay raise for educators, but we already have a educator shortage, and with that I see more leaving the field. Districts will probably have to make tough decisions on how many educators they can sustain to make up for paying private Contractors for the services they already receive now with the AEA's. Social Emotional/Behavior in our schools is more important now more than ever. WHY would we take that away? When did we quit doing what's best for kids and families? Thank You Annette Clarahan

Name: Ashley Kunze

Comment: I dont believe this law should be passed my kids will be effected badly by this decision. My kids get speech thru AEA and prior to going to school my son received speech therapy in home. My son is in special ed and has OT thru out the school year . My oldest has autism and has IEP in place . We depend on these services for our kids to be able to learn and grow.

Name: Jeff Grabe

Comment: To whom it may concern: This is your time committee. It is time to stand up and strike down the continued attack on Iowa's public schools. AEA's are essential to our students' education in both private and public schools. If you need any reminder or have no idea how important the AEA is to our educators, go back and watch the news conference from Perry a couple weeks ago and listen to what their Superintendent speak's on the impact the AEA had on this tragedy. Actually here is

the link: <https://youtu.be/ZDFzLIW0emA?si=epGvVKDWN43hdFT> To be honest as a teacher for over 23 years, sometimes the AEA really ticks me off when they try to change what I am doing. But those conversations always spark discussion, and then we come together and end up finding a better way to serve our kids. So now, this is your chance, have these tough discussions, call out the high ups and challenge them to ask why this makes sense. Because it doesn't. Unless you are looking to privatize education. Follow the money here.

Name: Gary Carr

Comment: With the deadly shooting at Perry High School that killed 11 year old Ahmir Jolliff, Principal Dan Marburger and wounded five others, the timing of this bill couldn't be worse!. About 100 staff from Heartland AEA stepped into action to provide emergency mental health services with school psychologists and school social workers to assist students with posttraumatic stress. Its evident that these services have never been more vital. VOTE NO to HSB 542!

Name: Andrea Bashore

Comment: As a nurse who has served numerous years in the pediatric field I know how essential early screening, detection and treatment are to our youth. As a parent in a smaller community I see daily how valued AEA provided services are to students and teachers. I implore you to look very carefully at the cuts Reynolds is proposing to our Area Education Agency services. These cuts do not have the best interest of Iowa children in sight. As elected legislators, please recall the oath you took to serve and represent the people of Iowa

Name: Jessica Gumm

Comment: Im strongly opposed to bill House Study bill 542. AEA is crucial to our schools and their education. We are a produce of early intervention for my daughter with speech therapy at age 3. My neurodivergent child still uses their services. My neurotypical child benefits from many of the programs they help support and supplies her teacher has access to. We need to STOP taking services away that help our kids and educators and instead give them more support!!! Schools and the kids cannot strive on fumes!!! We need to do better by them!!

Name: Sharon Brice

Comment: I strongly oppose this bill. Every child in our state benefits from AEA services. As a math teacher, I begin each school year with trainings free to our district from the AEA. I continue to meet with AEA personnel for professional development to better understand math standards and best instructional practices. During the summer I receive continuing education credit from AEA instructors and have easy access to my transcripts of courses and trainings completed. These are just a few services that AEAs provided to myself and my district impacting ALL of our students! We ALL need the AEA!.

Name: Jordan McDowell

Comment: To whom it may concern, Please do not dismantle and defund AEA programs in our public schools. Teachers are already struggling to receive the support desperately needed. Putting these services back onto schools puts pressure on not only the educators but the students and families who rely on them. This will particularly affect impoverished areas the most, and those children will lose any chance of success without support. This is not what any Iowan resident wants, (regardless of political affiliation,) and will prevent population growth as our education system further spins down the drain. Please introduce bills that actually support our educators and students in low earning districts.

Name: Sue Wede

Comment: AEA was such a huge help with my grandson. They got him access to PT/OT and the walkers that he needed. I truly believe without their help he would not be where

he is today. Also, the help that they provide students at school is incredible. Some students could not receive programs like speech therapy if it was not offered.

Name: Debboe BERTELSON

Comment: Please vote no to HSB 542. The AEA is very vital and necessary for our rural schools. We need to keep this available to our students. I have 2 grandsons that have come so far with the AEA.

Name: Jennifer Dutcher

Comment: Please vote no to this bill. This impacts my life greatly as a educator and mom as thank you to the AEA I was able to obtain my Substitute Teacher Authorization Certification. I love my new career path and I am used every single day! Teachers and classrooms need Substitutes. There is a huge shortage. Without Substitutes classrooms would be divided every day and other classrooms how is this okay for your children to be successful? We also need new training, so we can be the best at what we do and the AEA helps to provide that. Not only would this impact education, but it's a living for my family to take care of them. The AEA also has to provide many services for our Special Needs child. Without these services I'm not sure what our family will do once dad and I are gone. These services are helping to guide a path to her future of living independently. Once we are gone it would be on her siblings to take care of her. Thru the AEA they are helping her understand job success, how to do a job, what that helps impact, how to take care of herself. How is her future not any of importance as yours. If this was your child you would want these services and the best for your child. I know that you are wanting more funding for private school. Taking from one for the other isn't okay as we have been down the private school route as well and it was not a good thing. I would love to speak to you in all sorts of aspects to each situation that I have had if you're willing to listen. This bill also I believe impacts mental health in so many ways. Have you all not learned from Perry. I lived in Perry. That was my Principal. I Graduated in '99 but this still has impacted me greatly. Teachers and Substitutes need to know how to fight for children that has no voice for services that are needed in whatever aspect that is especially literacy. Early learning of literacy impacts Graduation rates and this bill effects early learning. Please vote no and revise how you can do things a different way. Visit schools and educators and see how this impacts others. Thank you.

Name: Madison Winkelman

Comment: I am writing to share my concerns and impact of HSB542 and how it will make a negative impact on the kids, parents, and teachers of our rural community. Personally, I have benefitted from so many different supports through the AEA. Although I am a special education teacher I have benefited from many resources, not just special education supports. I have learned and become a better teacher because of professional development I've received, through the AEA. I have been able to get resources to bring into my classroom for my students through the media library, that I wouldn't have the funds to pay for otherwise. I have witnessed first hand how the crisis team has been utilized as our community went through devastating losses. The AEA provides so many additional supports to help educators and parents better themselves for the future of our state, the kids!

Name: Jesse Greenslaugh

Comment: NO TO HSB542! The AEA services have been instrumental in supporting both students and staff in our building. There are a minimum of 9 highly trained specialists serving my classroom/building (Keokuk Middle School) regularly providing a mixture of direct instruction or consultation to not only my students but ALL students. They provide training for staff and paraprofessionals to help facilitate inclusion, etc. These services include: Physical Therapy 2 Occupational Therapy 2 Speech Language Pathologist 2 Vision Consultant 1 School Psychologist 1 Special Education Consultant 1 At any time I can call or email these people and work through any unique situation for any student. Simply put, these people help students

learn how to use their body more efficiently (i.e. walking, feeding themselves, writing, typing, speaking /communicating). Once those goals are achieved they continue to help students expand their skills and reduce skill gaps between them and their peers. They help to modify and accommodate the general education curriculum so that all students can participate. They teach me and my paraprofessionals new strategies and activities that we can use with students. They help us create indepth behavior plans for students with the most significant challenges. They help me navigate all the legal paperwork that is necessary to provide a student with a quality Individualized Education Plan (IEP). If additional resources are needed outside of my buildingassigned AEA team, the AEA provides additional teams of people that specialize in specific areas. A few teams that I frequently work with are:Transition Planning Team (preparing for life after high school)Challenging Behavior / Autism Team (social behavioral support)Assistive Technology Team (finding the appropriate tools (devices) for students to communicate with.)The AEA also provides a vast media library that teachers can use to further support students at all levels and abilities. Teachers and service providers/specialists can check out books, and digital content, and try assistive technology devices for free. These services are CRUTIAL as these materials are not readily available in my district. This library allows us to trial different toys, equipment, and devices to see what will work for the student before committing to purchasing them out of pocket. Therefore saving the district from wasting funds on things that will not work for the student. It provides a variety of ways to reach students at different levels.The AEA provides classes, conferences, and training to keep teachers up to date on the latest technology and relevant strategies. They provide a crisis team that supports districts dealing with unfortunate loss/tragedy (our district has needed this in recent years). These are just a few of the things that directly affect me and my daytoday operations. Losing these services is detrimental to students! Losing these services increases the stress on the classroom teachers who are then required to plan for and provide equivalent services to stay in compliance with the students IEP. This is an impossible task and will drive good teachers out of the field. I as the classroom teacher manage the daytoday operations for the students but it is the IEP TEAM (including AEA professionals) providing services, ideas, and support that allow students to grow. I can not fulfill the role of teacher and 9+ professionals, not to mention our specialized teams. In short, I can not do my job without them and that will hurt students. And there are many more services offered by the AEA that are not even mentioned here that will be cut! Without a doubt rushing this bill through will diminish the capabilities of my team to effectively support our students. These changes pose a threat to the quality of education and support our students receive. I do not believe that individual school districts with or without support from the state can replace this level of quality and service in such a short time. Sincerely,Jesse Greenslaugh

Name: Karen Hesse

Comment: Please oppose HSB 542. Iowas AEAs provide numerous services to schools. The dramatic reduction in services that is being proposed will have a negative impact, especially on rural schools whose resources are already limited. These schools will not be able to afford the resources and staff currently provided by the AEA. While the governor specifically said no special education funds would be cut, a cut to general education is a cut to special education. Special education students are general education students first, so any services removed will impact special education services. I urge you to oppose this bill.

Name: Sarah Shelquist

Comment: I am writing in opposition of HSB 542. I have numerous concerns. Primarily the alignment of this bill with Project 2025, Gov. Reynolds connection to this manifesto, and her misleading comments to Iowans, which shows cowardice on her part that she can not OWN her beliefs in the face of Iowans. Service for all students will be disrupted, schools will have less localized control over special education, and the Governors office will hide the transparent work the AEAs are currently doing in her

politicized State Department of Education. This bill will continue to decimate Iowas public education system, fails to support teachers and students, and will eventually lead to significant economic repercussions down the road. When we can no longer keep young Iowans in Iowa or recruit businesses to our state.

Name: Bill Pattee

Comment: I am writing to express my strong opposition to HSB 542. Our Area Education Agencies provide much needed supports for ALL students across the state. In Southwest Iowa, not only does Greenhills AEA support students with special education needs, it also supports our teachers with continuous learning / best practices and our students by providing access to technology and media resources that they would not otherwise have access to. Taking away or severely limiting the AEAs ability to provide these services will negatively impact all students, but especially in our rural schools and leave them at a distinct disadvantage compared to larger urban schools.

Name: Doug Graham

Comment: VOTE NO to HSB 542! It will ruin education in Iowa. With HSB 542, the school districts would directly get the funding allocated to Special Education ONLY the districts wouldnt get all of the flowthrough money that currently goes to the AEAs. The funding for EVERYTHING ELSE the AEAs do to support the students, teachers, and other school faculty would be retained by the state. School districts will NOT receive the flowthrough money that currently pays for nonspecial education services if this bill passes. This means that school districts lose everything but Special Education Consultants. School Districts get NO NEW MONEY to replace what was taken away. Schools would have to hire their own individuals or contract for the support. The AEA system is efficient because one literacy consultant can serve a dozen school districts. Individual schools wouldnt be able to afford to hire the services that AEA provides to them. The bill also requires school districts to apply for Special Ed help to be provided by the new AEA structure by April 30, 2024, all before the approval (or not) of the bill by the legislature. How can this be possible?

Name: Patricia McBride

Comment: Why does the governor and the political people feel it is necessary to fix something that is not broken. I believe you have other things that are far more important and more in the line of your duties to the voters. It is not broken. Leave it alone.

Name: Brittany Metcalf

Comment: I am in support for better teacher wages. I am not in support of the actions to the AEA. AEA provides so many resources and services for our school districts, communities, and students. We NEED and SUPPORT the AEA.

Name: Theresa McAllister

Comment: I am writing this in opposition of House Bill 542. My husband and I are parents of 3 grown children, grandparents and we have both served on our local school board for a total of 17 years. All Iowa schools need AEA services!! You have no Idea what your cuts will do to students. We also have personal experience with special education and all students with disabilities. Your proposed bill hurts kids of all ages. Stop, slow down, and actually read letters, emails and talk to the thousands of Iowa students and families this will impact. Mark and Theresa McAllister

Name: Kim Krohn

Comment: The Green Hills AEA has been invaluable to me as a middle school teacher. I use it for a lot of different things such as OT, PT, speech services, school psychologists, behavior management, math, literacy (currently taking the class for the LETRS program), professional development, etc. My concern is for the students, families, teachers, and schools that use the services of the AEA. It seems like this was

introduced very quickly, and I hope that you will slow down and analyze how this will affect everyone in the state of Iowa. Please vote no for this bill.

Name: Amy Grahns

Comment: Im writing to ask that you vote no on House bill 542.I have been working as a pediatric occupational therapist for the past 36 years, with the last 20 years as a school based OT at Grant Wood AEA. I recently moved to working in Early AccessBefore moving to Iowa, I worked in Texas, with time working both in Early Access and in the schools. Schools that either hired their own support staff (OT, PT, SLP) or contracted with outside agencies. The difference between the urban schools that had money and the (mostly) rural schools that didnt was staggering. The bigger districts had curriculum consultants, media services, social workers and strong TAG programs. Not to mention plenty of OTs, OTs and SLPs to meet whatever they decided the need was. Smaller districts had none of that. I served one district that had a total of 4 hours OT support for the entire month. No OTs lived in that area and they didnt have the money needed to draw professionals for more urban areas. I worked in a large, urban district in a very poor part of town. They had similar problems. They tried to fill the gap by hiring whoever they could, whether or not they had experience in school based therapy and how it differs from the medical model. They essentially ended up with a private therapy model within the school that in no way met the needs of the students. There are SO may reasons why this bill is bad. I know it promises pay increases from teachers that make it hard to say no to, but this is a bad, bad bill for Iowa schools.

Name: Betty Wolfe

Comment: This bill, in my opinion, is coming not from the needs of Iowans.If our parents and school districts had all asked for this, it would make sense. They didn't. This bill says it is to improve education, but the more I read of what it will cut, that is a bunk.The Governor's restructuring bill may be working, I have no clue. When will we know the positive impact of the ESAs? Not sure on that, especially if the same accountability isn't part of private education. And I am waiting for the other shoe to drop, meaning higher than our already high property taxes and more.This bill guts programs that have literally saved lives. This bill creates a burden for smaller communities and large ones. This bill does not ensure a better and equal education for all.This bill needs to go.Lumping it in with an increase in teacher pay is just plain wrong. Please, either gut this bill, or throw it out, with the bath water, but let's keep the babies. It would be nice to believe our state government has all of our best interests in mind.

Name: Ben Lueth

Comment: I am writing in opposition to HSB 542, in specific to how it drastically cuts the support provided by the Area Education Agencies to school districts. As an Iowan born and raised, a successful product of the public education system, I am deeply disappointed and concerned by the proposed bill. I benefited from reading services provided by the local AEA as a child, and cannot fathom why it could be considered a good idea to remove these numerous systems of support for the children currently in the school systems. The range of services facing cuts under this bill is extensive and critical. They encompass essential supports for students, including academic and social/emotional/behavioral assistance; invaluable resources for schools like classroom book sets, coaching, consultation, and library & digital resources; crucial supports for school districts such as cybersecurity and emergency response; and indispensable services for educators including training programs and curriculum support.These services form the backbone of our public education system in Iowa. Their elimination would be nothing short of catastrophic for the states education, undermining the very foundation of our community's learning environment.The removal of these services would not only diminish the quality of education but also place an undue burden on our teachers, schools, and districts. The strength of our public education system lies in its ability to offer comprehensive support to ALL

students, educators, and families. By taking an axe to this system, House Study Bill 542 risks the future of public education in our state. The proposed solution of having the Department of Education step in to fill these supports is a nonviable solution. The AEAs are better equipped to handle their local districts, and have people directly in the schools and education facilities to already meet these needs. Rural schools in particular would be devastated by the cuts to resources, training, and programs offered by the AEAs, with no viable replacement waiting for them. I ask that you oppose HSB 542 in the name of preserving our public education system.

Name: Glennis French

Comment: To whom it may concern, I strongly opposed the Study Bill 542. I think you need to look in to what that really takes away from our children . I am a parent that has used the resources from Area Education Agencies (AEA). My child would of not have had a change with getting an education had AEA not helped him. We need AEA! Our schools need AEA. We would be hurting our schools, teachers, Parents and children. Please reconsider and look into all the programs that help our children first before you pass this bill. I do agree with Teachers getting a raise part of the bill. I feel they are teaching our next generations. I think it's very important to our country! They are the next leaders. Who wants to be a teacher and have to do what they do everyday and not make much money. It's a special person I would say. Respectfully submitted
Glennis French

Name: Sarah Post

Comment: The proposed changes to the AEA are abhorrent and will have a detrimental effect for ALL schools and students in the state of Iowa. As the daughter of a rural AEA employee, I see the hard work and vital resources they provide to rural schools who would not be able to afford the same services through private companies. The proposed bill poses a significant threat to the quality of education our children receive. Eliminating educational services, media, and technology support means a direct reduction in resources available to students, hindering their ability to access essential learning tools and information. This will have a DRAMATIC impact on students and schools, especially rural schools as schools will have to find funds, resources, and staff to pay for these services. Special education students are general education students first and always, so removal of services is a removal of services for ALL students. I ask that you vote no to these changes. AEAs are VITAL to our schools and employees deserve to keep their jobs. Anyone who claims to care about children and our education system should absolutely vote NO to this bill.

Name: Alan Thomas

Comment: I am a lifelong, proud Republican. I voted for Mrs. Reynolds twice and until recently would have had no hesitation to vote for her again. However, it's become too hard to ignore the ways in which the current crop of Republicans in the Executive and Legislative have started to harm Iowa where we're already hurting most the economy. By turning down free Federal money that would support workers with childcare and summer programs, and now with House Study Bill 542 which will take resources directly out of our schools, our local "representatives" have clearly lost their way. We talk a lot in Iowa about how great our state is and how people would love it here if they took a chance on it. But the more baffling policies are pushed through that take our state closer to the ugly stereotypes we've weathered for years, the less of an attractive prospect living here is. I can't count the number of my son's friends who have told me that as soon as they graduate, they're out of here. You can't expect to bring in new talent or even keep the folks we have when you're intent on driving down quality of life here! I am not sure what happened but I can only pray that those sponsoring and endorsing these brainless decisions look within themselves, open their hearts to God, and do the right thing to turn this ship around.

Name: Amanda Larkin

Comment: I am opposed to House Study Bill 542. I am concerned about the education system

in Iowa and dismantling of the AEAs. Not having all of the AEA services will take services away from students, families, schools, and teachers. There are so many services that are behind the scenes provided by Iowa AEA employees. I am a licensed social worker and have worked in mental health, education, substance abuse services, corrections, and health care. I feel I make the most difference in lives of people as an AEA social worker. I get to work directly with students and families and also I get to work with the teachers and administrators that impact the lives of children every single day. The schools that I work in consider AEA staff as part of their team to help students day in and day out. I have been a part of the Crisis Response Team at our AEA. I have responded to school when students and teacher have died and when the community is struggling with a crisis. This work is challenging and also imperative. The families I work with feel the AEA is another resource for them. There are times they call me as the AEA social worker before they call the school with a concern or question, and I am able to connect them with what they need in and out of schools. Our AEAs ensure equitable services across Iowa for ALL students. There is no way for equitable services and protections to exist with each district forced to chose how they will serve students with limited resources. I am very supportive of the portion of the bill to raise teacher pay although it needs some work as it is one time money and districts will have to figure out how to sustain it. But I am not in favor of raising pay while at the same time taking away their supports. These are and should be separate issues. Teachers I work with are very concerned about not having the AEA support for their students and themselves. I am opposed to all the actions toward to the AEA in the bill at this time. If there needs to be reform, please consider a slow and planned process for reform, but not a full gutting of an agency that is relied on by so many.

Name: Caitlin Dolly

Comment: I would like to express my opposition to House Study Bill 542. The AEA has been a vital part of our family. We've utilized their services specifically with our son who was born prematurely and has faced many challenges of his own. The AEA does not get the recognition it deserves. It serves more in the background but has left tremendous impact in so many people's lives. Our son was able to utilize early access, occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech therapy, and audiology services all within the first few years of his life! When he was dismissed by other health care professionals over concerns of speech delay, the AEA was able to evaluate him, determine he was delayed in both expressive and receptive speech and started therapy immediately. He went from saying 2 words to 150 words in less than a year due to the wonderful speech therapists through the AEA. I support an increase in teacher's salary but dismantling the AEA is not the way.

Name: Colleen Knipper

Comment: Please oppose this bill. School districts rely on the education services and media services provided by the AEAs to support general education and special education students. There is no plan to replace this funding to districts, which will hurt all students. I agree with the teacher pay increase, but this should not come with a loss of necessary AEA supports. Any change to AEA services/structure should come after thorough discussion with all stakeholders and should not be rushed as this bill is being.

Name: Chad Johnston

Comment: I would like to express my opposition to House Study Bill 542. As a lifelong resident of Iowa, small business owner for over 20 years in Iowa, an Iowa taxpayer, and a voter, I respectfully ask you to oppose HSB 542. Dismantling Iowa's AEAs will have a negative impact on all students and place additional stress on teachers and administrators, especially in smaller and moderately sized school districts like North Polk. The impact of this bill on Iowa's children and families who rely on the AEAs services will be detrimental to their success. Furthermore, as a small business owner it is alarming to see these kinds of attacks on Iowa's education system and the image

it portrays of Iowa when businesses and professionals consider moving to or staying in Iowa. As a state, we need to do better for our children.

Name: Sarah Hellman

Comment: As an educator in a rural school district we rely our AEA resources extensively. They have helped our district thrive with literacy instruction, support with behavior concerns, and implement new strategies. Our AEA employees are there to support our educators and our students to ensure they get the education they deserve. If you care at all about our children's future in Iowa please vote no on House Study Bill 542.

Name: Sara Casteel

Comment: I am in opposition to the HSB 542 bill. The AEA has been a vital part of my life as a child, and as a parent of a child with vision impairment and profound intellectual and physical disabilities. As a child, I received reading intentions from Grantwood AEA speech therapists as a general education student to prevent me from requiring an IEP. As a parent, the Heartland AEA staff have worked with my son in our home using a multidisciplinary approach from an infant to 3 years of age. They provided us with vital medical equipment while we waited for our sons Medicaid waiver services to be approved. As my son transitioned to school at the age of 3, the AEA staff once again rallied around our son and helped provide specialized assessments to ensure my son would have the necessary supports in place to keep him safe and supported in school. These supports were include, but are not limited to, assistive technologies for speech and mobility; audio translated materials, modified books and other visual materials to include braille, simplified images and tactile elements; medical equipment to for school to transfer and care for my wheelchair bound child; working with his teachers and school staff to ensure the classroom wa setup in a way my son could access evertng via wheelchair, as well as provide him the essential visual supports he requires; as well as helping us submit requires to insurance for a new wheelchair, medical bed, hoyer lift, and bath chair the my son requires as home to be safe. Without the AEA speech, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and school of the blind teacher , my son would not be doing so well academically. There are many other non special education services the AEA provides to our school district. These services include instruction and assessment services in math, language arts and reading recovery, digital and audio books to supplement school library materials, and improving teaching instruction by providing professional development, just to name a few. The Heartland AEA stepped into action to provide emergency mental health services with school psychologist and school social workers to assist students with posttraumatic stress in response to the horrific tragedy in Perry High School. I am so thankful for the AEA staff that were able to provide those supports, and to all the AEA staff around the state that provide these services daily to our kids.

Name: Emily Tiedtke

Comment: While i am all for raising teacher pay, at the expense of the aea is not the answer. These need to be 2 separate bills. AEAs are providing way more services to districts than it seems are being discussed. It is imperative to look deeper into this and make appropriate and meaningful changes. All hands on deck to do whats best for OUR CHILDREN! Please please consider.

Name: Rebecca Knispel

Comment: I would like to express my opposition to HSB 542. I have used my local AEA for my daughter and myself. In 2nd grade my daughter received services from the Green Hills AEA because she could not pronounce words with r in them correctly. Besides affecting her speech, her r pronunciation was causing her to spell words incorrectly. For example red was now wed. A year after her evaluation, she no no longer needed their services. I am also a substitute teacher in the Treynor school district. I have utilized our local AEA numerous times for help with continuing education credits. As a sub, I have personally seen all the wonderful things the AEA provides for our

schools. I urge you to please vote No on HSB 542!!

Name: Lisa Metzler

Comment: Please vote no on HSB 542. I can't imagine where my boys would be right now without the involvement of our area AEA and the wonderful professionals that have worked with them and our family. My two youngest have both utilized physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech therapy both in our home through Early Access and then in school. One had services all the way through his high school career. The other is still receiving services in school as an 8th grader. The help and guidance they have given to my boys individually, as consultation with their teachers and to our family have been incredibly valuable to their well being and their success. I don't even want to think of how much further behind they would be if not for our AEA. Please, vote no on HSB 542.

Name: Janelle Darst

Comment: I'm very concerned with the slashing of all services the AEAs provide, especially PRINTING services. School districts are able to pay a fraction of what it will cost them by ordering through the AEAs but if cut that is an expense that will be passed on to school districts. And that is NOT what is best for taxpayers! Cutting from one to pass it on to school districts to then pay MORE is not fiscally responsible for the state or the school districts. As a concerned member of the community and a parent, I believe that maintaining these services is crucial for the effective functions of school districts. Printing services play a pivotal role in facilitating the education system, providing necessary materials for both students and educators. Cutting printing services could deprive students of these valuable resources. I understand the need for budgetary considerations, but I believe that compromising the education system will have farreaching consequences. I urge you to reconsider the proposed cuts to printing services for school districts and explore alternative solutions to address budgetary concerns.

Name: Carleigh Jefford

Comment: As a future educator who is beginning their student teaching, I am frustrated and scared. As a future EDUCATOR we need the AEAs resources. Cutting the AEA is not the way to support children in Iowa. DO NOT PASS THIS BILL.

Name: Jere Vyverberg

Comment: Please accept my comments on HSB542. This bill has one good part that raises teacher salaries. They have been falling behind for years and need to be on par with other states around us. The AEA review and downsizing is the terrible part of this bill. I am certain the number of emails you are receiving against far outweigh the for. Please rework the bill to keep the salary increase for teachers and remove the AEA portion. You need more information from school districts relating the many benefits of the agencies.

Name: Jessica Martin

Comment: Oppose 544

Name: Brian Dunn

Comment: I'm writing to express my opposition to House Study Bill 542. Iowas AEAs work with school districts, private schools, correctional facilities, youth shelters, juvenile homes, and nontraditional schools to provide a number of services designed to enhance the learning and wellbeing of Iowa's kid's. Educational services like literacy, math, and science assistance for teachers; professional development opportunities for schools and teachers; and guidance for advice for talented and gifted students and programs. More important are the vital special education services AEAs provide. AEAs serve children from preschool to graduation; providing assessments for children to help determine if special education or educational accommodations are necessary; working with teachers to develop strategies and accommodations for not

only special education students, but also for students who may need just a little more support to thrive in the classroom setting. Behavior consultants help children and teachers manage classroom and learning issues resulting from childhood trauma, stress, or family resources. AEAs also provide support, and often advocacy, for students with hearing, speech, or vision issues. AEAs provide occupational therapy, physical therapy, and psychological and social supports. Iowas AEAs have been serving Iowans for nearly 50 years. The support and oversight of our local boards of directors have ensured that the Iowa AEA system is one of the premier educational service systems in the country offering programs that can be provided most equitably, efficiently and economically on a regional or cooperative basis among school districts. The proposed changes seem to be a hamfisted effort to reduce government, but not in the areas in which real change is required. The proposed changes to the AEA system during this legislative session are, in my opinion, unwise and bad for Iowa and Iowa's children.

Name: Ashley Osgood

Comment: To whom it may concerned, I would hope there is a thoughtful process involved in these decisions that are impacting so many children. The AEA has been an integral part of our school system and making quick decisions may not be the most effective approach. Teacher pay increase is a positive step.

Name: Sherri Neofotist

Comment: I am a constituent and am going in the record that I am opposed to HSB 542. I taught in 3 different rural districts in eastern Iowa for a total of 24 years. In each district other teachers and I continually made use of the resources provided by Grant Wood AEA. This bill, if passed, will have a huge negative impact on all schools, the educators, and most importantly, the students. I urge you to consider that Iowas 9 AEAs are critical supports for our schools, our students, and ultimately, our state. Sincerely, Sherri Neofotist

Name: Travis O

Comment: I am writing with strong opposition to HSB 542z Nothing is perfect. Are there some changes to be made? I'm sure. Education as a whole has a lot of changes that need to occur. Overall our children are suffering from conditions outside our control (COVID, poverty, severe social emotional needs, lack of teachers, etc). Now more than ever is not a time to be taking away education supports but to be adding to them. Listen to the voices of our educators in our schools. Taking away AEA support is only going to add to our teachers' work loads. This will further spiral our teacher shortage. AEA provides ample amounts of supports to our districts (curriculum development, check and balance system for SPED law, van mail, etc.), our teachers (media supports, professional development, consultation services, etc), and ALL students. As a taxpayer and a consistent voter, please hear me loud and clear when I say I support our AEAs. My children are benefiting. Their teachers are being supported and benefiting. Again I request that you share with our state the data the governor is using to dismantle a system from which we are all benefiting. Help my children, your children/grandchildren, teachers education needs more supports and not less! Say no to HSB 542!

Name: Sierra Schebaum

Comment: To Whom It May Concern, As an educator who just graduated in December, I can not express what the AEA, already has done for me and helped me with. I am a Preschool Teacher in Sidney Elementary School in Sidney, Iowa. I work closely with the AEA to figure out what is simply best for my students, they help bring in materials that I dont have access to without them. They help me with my kids on IEPs. They have helped me simply navigate being a new teacher and what to expect and how to set my classroom up. They have been the reason I have been able to handle the stress of a new teacher. If you take them away you are hurting only the

students and future leaders of Iowa, but also hurting your teachers. There is a shortage of teachers when I found a job in December and my educators in college where applying against 50 applicants. This only hurts the schools, the ones who need it most in small town iowa. The fact that this is a thought is a complete disgrace to what our state needs. I hope you can see through the fact that we need them. If it were not for them I wouldnt be able to manage everything as a teacher. Thank you for listening.

Name: Kate Fairfax

Comment: Dear Committee members and Governor Reynolds, I, like the countless others posting here, strongly oppose this bill against the AEAs. I am an SLP and a mother of twins who have both benefited greatly from assistance from the AEA. If it were not for the AEA my daughter would have no way of completing her school day with her peers, she should not be able to communicate with, sit with them or safely complete her day and assignments. The Heartland AEA staff have helped get the supplies and equipment she needs as well as providing training to the school staff with her each day to ensure she and the staff are safe. Please look further at what this will do to our schools, and all of the children in our state. Please take your job to heart and listen to the residents of Iowa of whom you are supposed to be working for and speaking for. Respectfully, Kate Fairfax

Name: Rebecca Havens

Comment: I am writing to strongly oppose cutting AEA services. As a teacher, I use their services very often. They provide me with books and other materials I wouldnt be able to get otherwise. They provide great professional development that I have engaged with many times. I use their services many times each year to get my students the help that they need. They also give me ideas on how to better support my students with diverse needs. The AEA staff has so much knowledge and experience with diverse problems that students come to school with, we would struggle to figure out the best path for those students without their expertise. Please support our teachers, students, and AEA staff. I would support the portion of the bill that would raise teacher pay as I think that is a big part of the teacher shortage issue.

Name: Audrey Mensen

Comment: I implore you to vote against the HSB 542 in its current form. I am all for the increase in teacher pay. This should be a separate bill. The AEA system provides vital services for ALL students. The quality of the education system in Iowa will fall off a cliff. Please take the time to learn the far reaching negative implications of this bill.

Name: Delores Wykert

Comment: As a parent of a former special education student and as a current teacher I am very much in favor of the proposed increase in teacher pay. Teachers work day and night with few accolades. We take our work home, we love our students as our own, we supplement needs in our classroom out of our own pockets. What other professional does this? None. As an educator, a parent, and a grandparent, I am very concerned about House Study Bill 542 and the impact that it could have on schools, teachers, students, and families. Schools, especially rural districts are already struggling. Again this year we are cutting two hundred thousand dollars from our budget. This equals cutting teachers, that means more work for those of us left behind, and that means less for our students. Increased pay for teachers is definitely needed, but if we are already cutting our budget, how are the schools, especially smaller districts, going to do this without support from the state? Make it make sense. As a parent of a former student served by Great Prairie AEA and as a former Special education teacher served by Mississippi Bend AEA, and a cuurrent kindergarten teacher served by Great Prairie AEA, I cannot stress to you enough the value and the impact they have had on me as a parent navigating unfamiliar waters, my son's education, and my career. Cutting any of the services that they provide to our schools is detrimental to

every student in our state. Iowa used to be a leader in education, and now we are just allowing students and rural schools to fall through the cracks. The state government is failing our students. Instead of cutting budgets, we should be investing in our students, our teachers, our schools, and our AEA's. We should be building up our future, not tearing it down.

Name: Katie Marchetti

Comment: Please vote no House Study Bill 542. This bill would hurt so many students in the state of Iowa, especially in rural areas. The AEA does so much for our students and the proposed bill is vague and leaves out so many resources the AEA provides. Please do not pass this bill.

Name: Abbey Williams

Comment: I oppose HSB 542. Did you know that AEAs offer offsite behavior programs for extremely challenging behaviors? Or that we provide school to kids in the homeless shelters? You know that extremely violent kid who is unable to control their actions, is now bussed to an offsite program to protect the rest of the student body? Who runs this. AEAs. Who builds relationships with some of the most trauma experienced children AEAs. And, I make less than a fast food employee. If you don't see how all departments are essential for the AEA to function, then you need to be more active in your community to see. To remove social and emotional supports from our educational system is basically 20 steps in the wrong direction. How do we expect kids to understand stress. Emotions, anger, hurt? With Social Emotional Learning. Our big decision makers here obviously lacked access to these resources in their age. Which explains how we have come to such a senseless situation. It's not AEAs that need a hard overhaul.

Name: Nicole Hall

Comment: Please oppose HSB 542 as is it currently being proposed. In its current form. Meaningful changes to a successful long standing system cannot happen overnight. Educational decisions are data driven. Make sure such a huge change to services the AEAs provide should be, too.

Name: Rebecca Havens

Comment: I am writing to strongly oppose cutting AEA services. As a teacher, I use their services very often. They provide me with books and other materials I wouldn't be able to get otherwise. They provide great professional development that I have engaged with many times. I use their services many times each year to get my students the help that they need. They also give me ideas on how to better support my students with diverse needs. The AEA staff has so much knowledge and experience with diverse problems that students come to school with, we would struggle to figure out the best path for those students without their expertise. Please support our teachers, students, and AEA staff. I would support the portion of the bill that would raise teacher pay as I think that is a big part of the teacher shortage issue.

Name: Kerry Aistrope

Comment: Please do not support continuing HSB 542 out of committee. The present form of the bill does not have clear direction and detail nor does it represent ideas for improving education for all children. Any bill for study should clearly detail what needs to be improved and actions to reach improvement. Simply removing resources doesn't improve education. Put some voices from around the state that represent students to get the desired results.

Name: Sarah Waskow

Comment: I am writing to urge you to oppose House Study Bill 542. I believe in growth and revision, but it should not be at the expense of students' needs. I believe communication with families and staff directly impacted by the AEAs needs to

happen to truly capture the positive impact of the AEAs.

Name: Heather Sharp

Comment: I am writing in response to what Ive read about HSB542.I have been an educator in a small district for 26 years. GPAEA has provided resources and supports to help all of our students and teachers during that time.I also received speech services when I was in elementary school. I was not in special education so would not have received these supports had it not been for Keystone AEA working with our school. Please do not allow this bill to pass. ALL students are worth having these extra supports provided to them. Thank you!

Name: Gail Maxwell

Comment: As a retired teacher who relied heavily on our AEA for training, services to students, and resources I oppose House Bill 542. Our schools, especially rural schools, cannot possibly provide these services on their own. All students and staff will suffer tremendously if these services and resources are cut. I could not possibly have done my job as a technology integrationist and teacher librarian successfully if I hadnt had access to classes and trainings provided by the AEA, to their experts in the field, and to the many resources I used from their media department that our district couldnt possibly afford. Every teacher in every school will tell you the same thing. We rely heavily on the AEAs. If we lose the training, resources and services they provide all students lose, including our students receiving special education services. I urge you to put Iowas children first and not pass this bill.

Name: Vince Winkler

Comment: I'm an educator who has worked in Iowa for 4 years. Despite living in Omaha, I have forgone closer, higherpaying jobs to work in Iowa precisely because the AEA system is far better for supporting students with special needs than anything in my home state. The AEAs have a better understanding of education law and best practices than any organization I've worked under or trained with in the last decade. Gutting the AEAs is akin to cutting off parts of the brain and hoping the body will suddenly work better. I ask you to please oppose HSB 542.

Name: Shannon Salazar

Comment: As a curriculum director in my district, I work closely with AEA staff to make sure ALL our students are receiving the educational supports they need to be successful. These supports range from consultants in special education, math, literacy, science, technology, assistive technology, etc. to social emotional behavioral health supports. We offer a variety of trainings for our staff and students in partnership with the AEA including The Science of Reading, The Writing Revolution, Teen Mental Health First Aid, Youth/Child Mental Health First Aid, Positive Behavior Supports and Interventions, and book studies just to name a few. I strongly feel this bill will be a detriment to Iowa students and the education experience they receive. I also feel that I would not be able to do my job without the partnership and collaboration of the AEA. In the past, we could take pride that public education in Iowa was top notch in our country. The current administration is putting that in serious danger. Please, vote NO to this ridiculous bill and help support public education be as great as it can be.

Name: Kris Baldwin

Comment: I am writing to let you know I feel strongly the HSB 542 bill will be detrimental to all children and educators and needs to be voted against. I am fully in support of the portion of the bill that increases teacher pay but fully against the rest of the bill with negative actions to the AEA. Please take the time to vote against this bill and put the children of Iowa first. Thank you for your time.

Name: Thomas Carver

Comment: I am writing to express strong opposition to the part of HSB 542 that would reduce

the good work done by the state's Area Education Agencies. I currently live in a metro area and I previously lived in small town and rural northwest Iowa. In both situations, the AEA's provide services to school districts that directly impact the quality of education for students. To place the burden on each school district to find their own resources assumes those resources are available which may not be the case, especially in the rural areas. Shifting the costs for those services to the local school district loses the benefit of the economy of scale of many districts working together. I urge you to reject HSB 542.

Name: Rebecca Williams

Comment: As a parent and childcare worker, I have seen the many benefits of AEAs not only in my home, but in the childcare center I work at. Without AEA, my oldest son who has Down Syndrome, would not have had many of the services necessary to get him to where he is today. My younger son would also not be benefitting from all the amazing programs that AEA offers if this was taken away. My younger son has a hearing loss and needs hearing aids to have functional hearing in his every day life. Without Early Access, he would have serious speech delays that would continue to hurt his progress in the long run. I have also personally seen children in the childcare center I am employed at receive these services and they many leaps and strides they have taken because of the tireless efforts of the staff at the AEAs. Getting rid of services from AEAs would be absolutely devastating for districts across Iowa, as well as thousands of families. I could not imagine what the impact of removing these services would be and fear that if things would be changed, it would greatly affect my own children. I urge you to keep these essential programs. They are vital to the current generation using them and generations to come.

Name: Joseph Dunn III

Comment: Stop trying to gut education services in Iowa. We were once the envy of the nation and the attack on education by this legislature has us on a trajectory to match the education attainment of the worst performing states in the nation.

Name: Kate Losaso

Comment: Please support our AEAs and to keep their services intact as they currently are. As a general education teacher, I have seen the benefits firsthand of both special education and general education supports that the AEA provides. The current bill that is proposed would significantly restrict and even eliminate these supports that have been so beneficial to my students. I thank you for your time and consideration and hope you choose to support our AEAs in their entirety.

Name: Katherine Anderson

Comment: I have to say I am very concerned about House Study Bill 542. As a special education preschool teacher I work in close cooperation with the AEA. I not only work with the consultants and social workers, but I also use materials on a loan basis. I have a device coming this week. I am also concerned as an educator. As you know, teachers need renewal credits to maintain our licenses. I take these courses through the AEA. It's affordable and they are good classes. Classes I need to make my teaching better. Sometimes, it's AEA classes that are taught to our entire staff. These are based on need. It improves education for our students. If you make us get these credits in the open market the cost will be astronomical. And it's unfair. We already get paid less than all other professional people. And what about the state mandated classes like blood borne pathogens and mandatory reporter training! Why mess with something that isn't broken? Sincerely, Katherine Anderson

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: Taylor Krohn

Comment: To whom it may concern, I am writing this today in opposition of HSB542. This bill would catastrophically impact small, rural schools across the state and I implore you as legislators representing rural districts to think carefully before ripping away services AEAs provide. As an employee of and parent to students who attend a small district, I cannot even begin to account for all the services my rural school is able to provide students thanks to Greenhills AEA. According to recent data, of the 1,323 operating schools in Iowa, 660 are rural. Without AEA, these schools cannot even begin to compete with the services large districts are able to provide their students. The passage of this bill would be another nail in the coffin to districts like mine; a district where my kids know all their teachers before walking in the classroom. A district where my kids feel comfortable and safe because they've known their teachers and classmates basically since birth. Please, I beg you to consider the impact this bill's passage would have on rural districts and reconsider taking action like this.

Name: Susan Nemitz

Comment: Please do not pass bill HSB542! I am not a teacher nor have I ever worked for the school, but every teacher that I have talked to thinks this is a terrible mistake! Why are we willing to negatively affect our students and teachers! I have lived in Iowa all my life and I don't understand why you are not accepting grant money to Feed Children, taking money away from our public schools to give tax breaks, now trying to dismantle AEA! What will be next? Iowa children and teachers deserve better than this! Vote no to HSB 542!

Name: Sally Stoakes

Comment: As a special needs parent, former school board member and current business teacher I am pleading that you vote NO to this bill! At East Mills we have had an abundance of tragedy: student suicide, a teacher's death and a student die in a car crash...all in one school year! We have utilized so many services from the AEA for this alone. We are a small district, AS ARE 75% OF THE STATE, and there is no way we could afford to pay private entities that provide these mental health services in addition to all that the AEA does for our district. We will SUFFER so many setbacks in so many areas that you think our small districts can afford on their own and they can't! Our district has already consolidated and over time all that dismantling the AEA will do is force more of that because we cannot afford to provide all the services our students need, on our own! When my son was born we were told that he would never walk or

talk and just to love him for each day that we get with him. I could not accept that we wouldn't be able to at least TRY to get him services that allowed him to learn in his own way. The AEA provided early education services and SO MUCH MORE and for that we will be forever grateful. I understand you are not removing some of those services, but so many of the other services play into each of the special needs departments and you will dismantle them so much that there won't be enough people to provide the services needed! Please understand that you are going to destroy over 50 years of work that the AEA has provided and districts are already squeezing each drop from our budgets with no wiggle room...please stop trying to squeeze us into closing our doors!!

Name: Rebecca Havens

Comment: I am writing to strongly oppose cutting AEA services. As a teacher, I use their services very often. They provide me with books and other materials I wouldn't be able to get otherwise. They provide great professional development that I have engaged with many times. I use their services many times each year to get my students the help that they need. They also give me ideas on how to better support my students with diverse needs. The AEA staff has so much knowledge and experience with diverse problems that students come to school with, we would struggle to figure out the best path for those students without their expertise. Please support our teachers, students, and AEA staff. I would support the portion of the bill that would raise teacher pay as I think that is a big part of the teacher shortage issue.

Name: Vanessa Moore

Comment: Stop this ridiculous bill and support teachers and the AEA and all of the amazing work they do for our RURAL communities.

Name: Susan Nemitz

Comment: Please do not pass bill HSB542! I am not a teacher nor have I ever worked for the school, but every teacher that I have talked to thinks this is a terrible mistake! Why are we willing to negatively affect our students and teachers! I have lived in Iowa all my life and I don't understand why you are not accepting grant money to Feed Children, taking money away from our public schools to give tax breaks, now trying to dismantle AEA! What will be next? Iowa children and teachers deserve better than this! Vote no to HSB 542!

Name: Kathy Davis

Comment: This bill is bad in many ways. It does not help the children in any way. There are many students that would lose services. It is just another way to defend the public school system and open the door for privatization of services.

Name: Sameena Noetzel

Comment: Please consider the consequences of this bill. By passing this bill, schools will have inadequate funding to replace the services that are being lost. As many of smaller and mid sized will be especially hard hit as the proposed funds fall dramatically short of what would be needed to replace the services being lost.

Name: Joe Rich

Comment: I am writing to you as a concerned Iowa citizen, parent of two teen boys and a supporter of area education agencies (AEAs). I urge you to oppose HSB 542, which is a bill that would restructure and reduce the funding and services of AEAs in Iowa. This bill is not only unnecessary and harmful, but may also be unconstitutional and illegal. AEAs are a vital and valuable part of Iowa's public education system, and they deserve to be preserved and protected, not dismantled and defunded. AEAs provide essential support to school districts, especially for special education, professional development, and media resources. AEAs also provide no-cost access to high-quality, digital resources for accredited public and nonpublic PK12 schools. AEAs help ensure that all students in Iowa have lifelong access to high-quality educational

opportunities and resources. HSB 542 would undermine the local autonomy and accountability of the AEAs, by eliminating the elected boards of directors of each AEA and creating a centralized board appointed by the governor, and by giving more power and control to the director of the department of education and the department of administrative services. HSB 542 would also reduce the quality and accessibility of public education in Iowa, by cutting the funding and services of the AEAs by 25%, and changing the formula for the teacher salary supplement district cost per pupil, which would result in lower salaries for teachers and less resources for schools. HSB 542 may violate the Iowa Constitution and the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), by jeopardizing the right to a free and appropriate public education for all children in Iowa, and by exposing the state to potential lawsuits and sanctions from the federal government. HSB 542 would also go against the wishes of the majority of Iowans, who support the existing system of AEAs and oppose the governor's proposal to restructure and defund them. Therefore, I urge you to reject HSB 542, and instead support the existing system of AEAs that has been serving the educational needs of Iowas children and families for over 40 years. Please vote NO on HSB 542, and stand up for Iowas public education.

Name: Erin Pingel

Comment: As Early Childhood Director and Mother of three, I strongly support increased teacher pay as proposed in HSB 542. However, I am deeply concerned about potential legislative actions towards the AEA. The AEA plays an integral role in supporting both public and private schools. Eliminating certain aspects of the AEA could diminish crucial support for teachers and schools, ultimately jeopardizing teacher retention and negatively impacting student success. It is crucial to consider the broader implications before making changes that could undermine the wellbeing of children and families. Thank you for your consideration

Name: Madison Zirretta

Comment: As an educator and parent, I strongly oppose HSB 542. Our area education agencies provide a plethora of supports for our students and children. Without these supports, we would be stripping students and families of valuable resources. I think specifically of our students who do not have access to educational supports, specifically our early childhood population. What are they to do when their child needs OT, PT, speech, or behavioral support? Not everyone can afford to seek out private practices for these resources. It should also be mentioned that teachers rely heavily on AEA involvement for professional development, material support, and technology support. Most Iowa school districts do not pay for professional development, teacher materials, etc., but the AEA offers them at no charge (ex: Mandatory Reporter training, which is required by the state). Please, please, please look at the big picture. This will have a very significant negative impact on education in our state.

Name: Riley Tallman

Comment: Please vote NO to this bill. AEAs provide resources and support for ALL students in Iowa, not just those who receive special education services. Furthermore, districts would need additional funding to be able to hire professionals to provide the supports being eliminated from the AEAs. This bill will have a negative impact on education for all students. Thank you for your consideration.

Name: Aundrea Barnes

Comment: The AEA does so much for the staff and students at EddyvilleBlakesburgFremont Community School District! I cannot imagine what we would do without them.

Name: Phillip Johnson

Comment: Members of the Ed Committee I urge you all to not support the HSB 542 legislation. I'm a parent of two children who've benefited from the services provided by the

AEA's. I'm also the husband of a former teacher and current Literacy Consultant/Dyslexia specialist at the Central Rivers AEA. I've seen the benefit that this organization has on education from all sides as a parent, I witnessed the support my wife received as a teacher, and now I get to see the passion and effort these people pour into helping all children and schools. They deliver a multitude of services and resources to our rural schools that I fear will become impossible to replace. From resources and materials to expertise in helping with students and providing continuing ed to staff. Just to name a few. If you feel, there's a need for an audit or a review by all means proceed...but dismantling the system without taking that step first is political malpractice because there's no undo button if you rush into this. Please do not support this legislation. Sincerely, Phil Johnson, Grundy Center

Name: Chloe Stewart

Comment: As an educator in the state of Iowa, I cannot express how much it saddens me to see the proposal of this bill. The AEA provides services for schools that cannot be funded by the schools. All of the services that are being proposed to be removed from the AEA would mean that our schools that are extended comprehensive, like the school I work at, would not be able to make improvements and better education for the students being served. I do realize that there are some duplication of services when it comes to ELA support, but those so called duplicated services are not what you think they are. I invite you to join us on a day to day basis to see the true impact the AEA has on our education system. Then, you will truly understand the pivotal role the AEA plays in our schools on a daily basis.

Name: Melissa Boals

Comment: My name is Melissa Boals and my daughter Eloise receives services through the AEA at West Willow in their severe and profound special needs program. While I support this bill's changes to increase teacher pay, I am deeply concerned and opposed to the changes to the AEA. The services and coordination of services she receives through the AEA have been invaluable and are a huge part of her ability to meet her IEP goals. The short time frame for the choices to be made and changes to go into affect have the potential to leave Eloise and her peers stranded for services. Additionally the required oversight of an external agency is a necessity for special needs families who often have very few resources when things aren't going as planned. While the AEA may need reform, the time period is untenable and could lead to the detriment of Iowa's most vulnerable population, disabled children. I would ask the changes to the AEA be removed from the bill until further research and understanding of the needs of changes can be assessed.

Name: Hilary Miller

Comment: My name is Hilary Miller and I teach students with Significant Disabilities at a small school in southwest Iowa, Fremont Mills. I have loved working here for the last 8 years and know that it was my calling to become a teacher. As much as I would love a pay raise, I would not feel ok with taking it at the expense of my students. I am sure that many can justify this change that Gov. Kim Reynolds is proposing by assuring themselves that the necessary services will still be available through the AEA. Well, I am here to tell you that for our small, rural districts this is not the case. Many teachers in my district are using the Library and Digital resources weekly that are offered through the AEA. Working with a student with significant disabilities, I am constantly borrowing books from the AEA so that students can better access the general education curriculum. It provides hands-on materials that are vital for my student to learn that would otherwise be unavailable due to the funding we have available through our district. In the long run, it would cost much more money for each district to buy these materials that we are essentially sharing now. The AEA does a fantastic job at providing teachers in rural districts with new and research-based teaching strategies while providing training to make us better teachers. How would taking these skills from teachers not affect our students' learning and growth? I agree that teachers need better pay, however I also know that our government isn't

the best at managing our money. Please do not take opportunities away from students and their future when money can be spent better in other areas of our government to benefit our education system. The only way to build a better future is to educate our youth. Please, don't make this job more difficult by taking away vital resources that we use every day.

Name: Hope Blum

Comment: I am opposing the HSB 542. I have been a daycare provider and I have had AEA come in and work with some of my daycare children who had developmental delays. I also contacted AEA for my own 2.5 year old son who did not speak very much. I tease the gal who worked with him as he came in not talking and after working with her he has not stopped talking and is now 11 years old. We all know that you have to get help for children at a young age to make a difference and there is no benefit in AEA not being a resource for the children that need it. Who wants childrens development to stay the same or worse instead of improving? I also just learned that AEA reaches out to schools in need. Some community members from my town have assisted students from Perry dealing with the school shooting. Another very important resource we need. I oppose this bill and my vote will always be children! They are the future.Hope Blum

Name: Jessica Naaf

Comment: I am writing to ask that you vote NO to this bill! One of my daughters benefitted so much from AEA home services as a toddler, and I know many parents who have used the services or are currently using them for their kiddos (some toddlers, some in school). I know friends with kiddos in school who have really been impacted positively by AEA services, especially those in private schools who many not have access to any other support. Please take the time to read all of these comments and concerns that many are expressing here. AEA is vital to are community!

Name: Tami Davis

Comment: Three out of my five children benefitted from AEA speech services in their school. We live in a small community and I personally know of others who have utilized not only speech, but other AEA services as well. This bill will harm the kids as most rural small schools will not have the funding available to contact all the services that AEA provides. This bill is a bad idea as it will harm the youth who require these services and can't have access to them.

Name: Linda Goetz

Comment: Linda GoetzSubject: Opposition to Bill 542 Please Vote NOConcerned Retired teacher, Parent of children who benefited from AEA Professionals, and lifetime Iowa citizen who is very concerned with the governors plan to dismantle our invaluable AEAs.As a retired teacher who found the AEA to be most helpful through working with professionals who cared, I am having concerns that oversite of our AEA professions will become a ward of the state instead of relying on the professionals who work in our AEAs and collaborate with our teachers, administrators, and parents. Most teachers in our district could no longer attend conferences or seminars to further their knowledge and share with their colleagues in the district because of budgets. The state has promised money to the schools and it became less and less to meet the needs of students through teacher training. We came to depend on the professionalism of the AEA staff here in Pleasant Valley. They attended training through seminars and conferences and share their knowledge with us. I taught 6th and 8th grades and learned so much from these AEA professionals. Working with special ed staff, psychologists, social workers, occupational therapists, physical therapists, technology experts, and every day curriculum staff made our jobs as teachers more relevant and successful. The new plan would have school districts hire people in the community when schools are running on such tight budgets. I sat in meaningful meetings where several of these professionals who were there working together to help our students and our teachers in teaching with more success. Parents

became part of the plans and became comfortable and confident in the AEA staff. Parents were always grateful for our plans and worked with us. A Students individual IEP in all areas will be hard to meet without a fully staffed AEA and their professionals who service these students. Respectfully, Linda Goetz

Name: Tyler James

Comment: The proposed bill to defund the AEA is an insult to the reputation of Iowa as a leader in education. I urge those who are considering voting for this to understand inside of schools, this will have an immediate, detrimental effect on the quality of education and access to resources. Students who had a lifetime of opportunity ahead of them will find less and less help available in their journey to realize their potential. School employees, already working on shoestring budgets, will have to take on the burden of supplying their own materials and access to learning opportunities. And while the effects may not be felt immediately outside of schools, this will inevitably lower our standard of living, drive away potential employees and new families, and drastically diminish the ability of our graduates to compete on the national and international level. Attacking public education while propping up private schools as an alternative will have a widespread flattening effect on Iowans' growth and earnings potential for decades to come. Who will want to come here and start a family in this state if they believe that powers that be will stymie avenues to assistance if their child has dyslexia or autism? Who will want to start a business here, knowing their local workforce is in the bottom half of the nation for math and science? We have a choice as a state we can continue down our current path, gutting education now to pay for it in lost talent later, or we can step back up and become leaders again. It may be too late to prevent this bill from passing, but understand that the many, many citizens leaving their passionate comments here will remember what you do here today in the ballot box tomorrow.

Name: Laura Camerona

Comment: As a specialist in child development and mom of 3, I ask you to say NO to this bill. It does not serve the children of Iowa. Schools and teachers need the services that the AEA provides. Please trust the experts to decide what programs are helpful. We do not need politicians deciding what programs are important and which are not. In order to keep families in Iowa, we need politicians making laws that help kids and families.

Name: Kristie Woods

Comment: I fully oppose this bill. Having children in AEA programs have helped them so so much. My oldest having autism and having an AEA advocate to help her through her schooling. My middle child, having a speech Impairment so there for getting help through the AEA at school, to my youngest child, having severe disabilities. With out the help of the AEA in all walks of his life from practically birth till now (he's 10) I would have been lost! Children and families already fight hard enough everyday just to sustain, grow, learn and adjust. Making them fight harder for services that greatly impact the quality of life they deserve is abuse, neglect, and just plain wrong! The services provided by the AEA help families and children in all walks of life. Please please please do not make struggling families fight harder then they already are! A very concerned special needs mom

Name: Linda Boshart

Comment: I am writing to express my opposition to HSB 542 as it would be detrimental to children and families in Iowa, particularly those in rural Iowa. The AEAs are a vital part of support for students, teachers and families. They are also essential for our youngest learners the children who are ages birth to 3 years old through the Early ACCESS system. Please allow ample time to study information presented in the bill as there is considerable additional information from other perspectives which might better represent the opinions of the citizens of Iowa. Please vote no on this bill.

Name: Megan Hiner

Comment: I am a speechlanguage pathologist working in the Mississippi Bend Area Education Agency. As I am sure you are already guessing, I am concerned about this bill. I can list the reasons its detrimental to children, but many others have already listed those. I thought I might point out something legislators might not be considering. When the governor wants parents/districts to be able to have choice in their providers (e.g., Which SLP they have.) something I dont think they are realizing is: there is a really big shortage of SLPs. Most likely if this went through, the 57 SLPs at my AEA (or many of them) would just go work directly for the district, for a private company, etc so the district would most likely have the exact same providers with similar training. How does that improve achievement? There arent tons of extra SLPs available for these types of services. If you call any existing pediatric private clinic, the majority of them will tell you they are full. They cant take on anymore work. If we need to improve, chopping us into small departments, private companies doesnt suddenly make us better. We are growth minded people. If we need to improve, we are best served improving as a large unit rather than in these small companies/directly for districts. I dont see how this gives districts or parents choice.

Name: Tami Davis

Comment: Three out of my five children benefitted from AEA speech services in their school. We live in a small community and I personally know of others who have utilized not only speech, but other AEA services as well. This bill will harm the kids as most rural small schools will not have the funding available to contact all the services that AEA provides. This bill is a bad idea as it will harm the youth who require these services and can't have access to them.

Name: Madison Ovenshire

Comment: Although I am in favor of teacher pay raises, I am concerned about the implications that this bill may have on services like OT, PT, and Speech. As someone who has familiarity with other states education systems and similar for profit services, like those being proposed in this bill, I can say these practices lead to reversing the progress our state has made in student inclusion and the ability to confidently use the most up to date evidencebased practices. This bill will create a cascade of implications that impacts Iowas general education students but also special education students, whose voices are often not heard. For the benefit of all our students and educational professionals this bill needs to be a no.

Name: Leanne Travis

Comment: As a recently retired Professional School Counselor, former classroom teacher, parent and Grandmother of 3 school age children in Iowa Public Schools, I am Absolutely Floored that dismantling our AEA'S is even a discussion. In the time of crisis, any type of death of staff member, student or any crisis type event, our AEA professionals step in a moments notices to assist our entire districts. Our Administration, Counselors and staff members have been thoroughly trained in Crisis Response. Our teams have been trained by our AEA'S. I don't know what we would do with out that piece of the AEA alone. There are a Gazillion other crucial needs offered through our AEA's that districts, educators, parents and students rely Heavily on. Removing the immeasurable professional services to the districts supplied by our AEA'S would be a Crushing Blow to Iowa's Education System. Please destroy HSB542 Not our AEA'S.

Name: Jess Wise

Comment: Please vote no on this bill. As a graduate of AHSTW, I benefited greatly from AEA general education services. My teacher learned new teaching methods such as the Science Writing Heuristic. We participated in Math Bowls & TAG services. We benefited from SEL programs brought to our district from the AEA. We used the digital & media resources daily. The ways AEAs impacted my education through general education & media services were tremendous and I am now getting my

doctorate. Say no to this bill.

Name: Lorrie Anderson

Comment: I am a retired teacher whose students benefited from so many excellent AEA programs, facilitated by knowledgeable and dedicated teachers and staff. I am strongly opposed to HSB 542, as it will cut and damage an important network of support for Iowas students and teachers. I have read the many clear and moving comments from teachers and parents who rely on these services. Theres no need for me to repeat them. Here is what I would like to add to the conversation. Not one dime will be cut from the AEA. Reynolds, State of the State address. Really? And how will this new distribution of funds (to the schools, to private companies) be accounted for? What will ensure that essential programs are not cut because of lack of funding? It does not surprise me that this bill is already heading for committee and that Gov Reynolds will push for quick passage before the public can process its true effects. (Lets schedule our first meeting in sub zero weather.) It is one more step in the march to squeeze the life out of our public schools. Please, do your own research. I choose to believe that all of you care deeply about our public school system. Protect it. Support it.

Name: Hannah Graham

Comment: Please vote NO to HSB 542. AEAs provide many necessary services to kids in our state! In addition to offering special education support for visually or hearing impaired and mentally disabled students, AEAs collaborate with local school districts to provide a variety of services that encompass instruction and assessment in subjects like math, language arts, and reading recovery. AEA libraries enhance school library resources by offering digital and audiobooks. Plus schools can order enough books and supplementary material for all students in a classroom to read a book and discuss together. AEAs provide extra resources for talented and gifted students also, like programmable robots and experiment kits for independent study. Small school districts cant afford to offer this! AEAs also provide affordable professional development opportunities for teacher certification and to improve teaching instruction, and more! This bill is smoothed over to be a benefit to the districts to make "choices" but they're losing opportunities and they won't get the flowthrough funding that provides these services, they'll only get the flowthrough funding directed toward Special Education.

Name: Larry Fitzgerald

Comment: Because of Covid our schools have had a struggle like never before. Please do not shred the AEA's at a time when they are needed more than ever. Thank you for your consideration.

Name: Allison Clapp

Comment: To Whom It May Concern, As a teacher in the Davenport Community School District, I am writing you to advocate for the AEAs continued support and preservation. AEAs are fundamental in ensuring success for our students and staff. The professional development and resources are essential to our schools. I would like to state how utterly vital our AEA partnership has been to the students success in school. In working at a ESSA designated comprehensive building for the past five years, I can state that our growth and success in moving from extended comprehensive to targeted was hugely because of our AEA staff. Their knowledge of systems and accountability helped us do the right work and improve our structures to increase student achievement. The professional development, teacher team meetings, leadership meetings and resources have all contributed to this growth. Every student is a general education student first. Our AEA team members helped to build our universal core instruction to meet the needs of ALL students. Our partnership with the AEA staff is invaluable for our schools. Their collaboration supports student achievement, teacher effectiveness, and ensures best practices. Our entire school system benefits from the AEA supports. I kindly request your unwavering support

Name: Lori Bolin

Comment: I am a retired nurse and grandmother . I have raised my children through the public schools and have seen the benefits of AEA derive over the years . It has huge benefits to the school systems/teachers, children as well as their parents . This will be a huge loss to all of taken away .

Name: Drew Dornack

Comment: To whom it may concern: The AEAs play a vital role in our education system especially in rural Iowa. This bill as it is written will cripple education in our state. The services that the AEA offers to me as an educator are second to none. I am able to get resources and guidance in a moments notice. When we have experienced tragedy/trauma an AEA crisis team was assembled and meeting with staff and students the very next day. The recent response to Perry has been great. If you paid attention to the reports the AEA has been there every step of the way. I cant imagine the stress and pain that this legislation has put on the great employees of the AEA and their families. Even during this time they show up. To you I ask that you show up for them and vote no on this legislation and stand up for education in this great state!

Name: Shelly Vroegh

Comment: I am a twentyseven year veteran teacher in Norwalk and the 2017 Iowa Teacher of the Year. I would like to express my opposition to and concern with HSB 542. As it is currently written, this bill would essentially dismantle the AEAs as we know them now. While I do understand that initially the AEAs were created to serve students who need special education services, they have expanded and changed in the last fifty years to serve school districts in a variety of areas in addition to the stellar support schools still receive for students with IEPs. This bill will create hardships for students, families, educators, and school districts that will have a detrimental effect with too many repercussions to anticipate. Schools will not be able to replicate the efforts of the educational and media services cuts that are being proposed. For far too long, educators have been asked to do more with less and less money. This is yet another example. Rural districts will be decimated and even a district like the one I work in will be forced to make hard decisions that will have a negative impact on students, teachers, and families. While I do appreciate the nod to increasing teacher pay that is included in the bill, I would ask that you consider separating that from HSB 542 and more clearly articulate a sustainable plan for the proposed salary increase that will allow districts to make this more than a onetime thing. I thank you for the work you do and strongly urge you to oppose the bill as it is written now. We need lawmakers who are committed to supporting the work of teachers and ensuring that common sense laws are written that will positively impact our students. As HSB 542 is written now, I don't see how that can be accomplished and I worry that our already undersupported educator workforce will continue to decline. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Name: Ron Russell

Comment: I would like to express my opposition and concern with House Study Bill 542. I am writing to you to express my support for the AEA system. It is a system that makes sense fiscally and addresses the needs of rural districts. It is a system that identifies children with disabilities, and develops programs to improve educational outcomes. The ongoing cuts to the AEA system are at the point of impacting services to children, and the recent revelation of this bill seems to lead to a complete devastation of the AEA system, which I believe will ultimately harm the education of many children particularly those with disabilities. My perspectives come from two directions. I am a father of a (now adult) daughter with a disability who benefited from Early ACCESS and Special Education services through the AEA. My daughter is now a successful adult, with meaningful, competitive employment. She is living

independently. My daughter initially had inhome services from Early ACCESS to help her learn to walk, to address language and to address developmental delays. Her story is a successful one she has come a long way! And I truly believe the support from the AEA early on, and throughout her years in school had a major impact on her success. I am also a career long employee of the AEA system. This is my 33rd year working in Iowa's AEAs. My career started as a School Psychologist, moved into an Assessment Consultant position with the onset of school accountability through No Child Left Behind, and more recently is in the administrative area. So, I see the AEA both as a part of that system and as the father of a child who was positively impacted. I can be longwinded, but wanted to share just a couple of points that I hope the legislators will consider before making any sweeping changes to the AEA system: The elimination of AEA services (media, professional learning) other than special education. This raises the question of who will provide these services that include mental health services and crisis response services. The bill proposes flow through funds for special education to return to the district, but it is assumed/believed that the funding for media, mental health, professional learning and other services will disappear districts would be on their own to provide such services, with no known funding source. Districts need equitable access to this broad array of services to meet the needs of ALL students the AEA has consistently had positive feedback on the value of these services, over the years. The AEA system helps to provide equitable services to all students even those in small rural towns. The rural nature of Iowa's landscape is a reason that the AEA, as an intermediate education agency, was created. When Iowa's schools needed to respond to IDEA and provide a free appropriate education to ALL students, it was well known that small schools would not be able to recruit, hire or fund the necessary supports of professionals needed SpeechLanguage Pathologists, School Psychologists, Physical Therapists, Audiologists, Early Intervention Staff, Behavior Specialists the list is lengthy. An intermediate agency approach allows resources to be equitably offered to students even those in the smallest of Iowa's communities. While making teacher salaries competitive in Iowa is important, I don't believe that simply giving money back to the districts would allow the appropriate support to be provided to the large, and growing population of diverse learners with disabilities. Rural school districts would be hurt the most, if this bill proceeds they would not possibly be able to secure the necessary supports privately. And, it would be nearly impossible for an AEA to operate an organization with necessary skilled staff, in a system where their need is determined on an annual basis. The many highly qualified staff in the AEA system would likely flee to private entities where they could maintain secure employment. The resulting system of either totally privatized services or hybrid services (AEA and private) would become a more expensive system, with small districts having the brunt of the negative impact. There is an appeal of returning funds and control to the districts but the result, I believe, will be chaos, with small districts having difficulty getting the broad array of services needed. The recent comments that AEAs may be responsible for continuing "achievement gaps" is inaccurate and seemingly based on the wrong data. A recent media quote (even before the bill was released): National and state data shows Iowas students with disabilities have significant proficiency gaps, Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds said. While the AEAs will continue to serve students with disabilities, changes are necessary to improve student outcomes. A comprehensive review of AEAs will help identify solutions. Parents can be assured that their children will continue to receive the services they need. This type of conclusion is based on the "wrong data." National tests give us information on basic proficiency in the areas of reading and math. In the name of equity, our country has moved into analyzing "achievement gaps." When we consider some groups for example looking at students of different races and ethnicity achievement gaps can give us useful information that may point to needs for instructional change. But, consider students with disabilities. In order to "qualify" for special education services, evaluation teams must provide evidence that the student shows a lack of progress, discrepancy and need in order to become a student with special education needs to become part of the disability subgroup students MUST show an achievement gap. To then point to this population of student's achievement

gap (based on standardized group assessments) and suggest that an educational system is ineffective is based on faulty logic. The truth is, standardized assessments such as those used for federal and state proficiency assessment are limited in their ability to give us useful information for students with disabilities. Special education teachers and their teams monitor student progress through the Individual Education Plan (IEP) and this can often give us much better insights on student growth and progress. Consider this if Iowa eliminated the achievement gap between general education students and those with disabilities I think we would have eliminated disabilities! Our focus for students with disabilities needs to be on growth and improving educational outcomes. For students that have true disabilities, we cannot expect to eliminate gaps we can and should expect that students will grow and improve in response to high quality teaching. Through my parent lense my daughter graduated with a reading level of about fifth grade. Her basic math skills are significantly lower than this. She was born as a 2 pound preemie, and had a brain injury that caused both motor and learning disabilities. She received good instruction through Iowa's schools, including early intervention through AEA services. AEA supports were in place for her throughout her school career. If we looked at her standardized test scores, we might focus on a dramatic achievement gap, but if we focus on the amazing growth she made between birth and age 18, we would see a picture of a success story. And Iowa's AEAs were a part of that story helping her school district provide the best programming possible. So, I believe that the legislators need to be cautious looking and national and state standardized testing should not be the only or even primary data point to judge the AEA system. The claim that the AEA has no oversight. I believe this is not true. AEAs go through regular accreditation processes, and there is much customer satisfaction data available regarding AEA services over the years. Transferring accountability to the Department of Education would seem to bring administrators to the Iowa DE Des Moines offices and take educational leaders from their communities where they can be more effective. Removing oversight and administration from the local AEA systems does not seem to accomplish the goal of more local control. In the current AEA systems, the local AEA leadership works with their districts to provide personalized services as much as possible more local control than one might expect from a system overseen by additional leaders in Des Moines.

Name: Chris Crise

Comment: Please vote NO to HSB 542. The AEA has assisted members of my family. With the AEA services these family members were able to successfully graduate high school. Some have been able to graduate college. Without the assistance from the AEA this would not have been possible.

Name: Brittania Morey

Comment: I would like to express my opposition to HSB542. The AEAs are a vital part of our public education system and we should not be discussing cutting everything except special education. The professional development, curriculum, speech and learning support and therapy, social work and school counseling supports EVERYTHING that the AEAs offer is important. It isn't as simple as saying the private sector can pick these things up. Do these services exist in the private sector in the way schools need them to? Are they available at all in our rural communities? Many rural communities only have the AEA as an option. If the AEA services are cut what are those schools to do? This is a bad bill with seriously bad consequences for students in the state of Iowa. There are many children and families that are supported by the AEA system before school age and during school age that do not fall into the category of special education but yet need additional services to succeed. Do not take away the vital services the AEAs provide our schools, our students and Iowa communities. Thank you.

Name: Kay Petersen

Comment: To Whom It May Concern:Please vote NO on House Study Bill 542! I would like to express my opposition and concern with House Study Bill 542. I am an Administrative Assistant at South Page Community School District. ALL of our students benefit from the services provided by Green Hills AEA. I strongly oppose the passing of proposed House Bill 542 and encourage the committee to further research the impact these programs have on our students AND teachers. Our AEAs are critical to the success of all schools in Iowa. Our AEA staff helps implement changes to assist with behavior and educational issues with general education and special education students.The AEA staff that assists our school is amazing. They work directly with the teachers to brainstorm and help them come up with new and the most effective ways to help our students thrive. The AEA provides necessary services to our school each and every day, and it would be a great disservice to our teachers and future leaders to limit the AEA access to our schools.Please do your part as our elected leaders to ensure fully informed decisions are being made.

Name: Jess Ehm

Comment: To Whom it may concern,As an Iowa parent and child of retired educators from from rural Iowa Iam deeply concerned of the negative impacts. This bill will have on small rural districts. The aea system supports educators and schools in many capacities that small districts will not be able to provide without the aea system in its full capacity.Ultimately the children and small rural districts will suffer.Concerned citizen and parent,Jess Ehm

Name: Leanne Travis

Comment: As a recently retired Professional School Counselor, former classroom teacher, parent and Grandmother of 3 school age children in Iowa Public Schools, I am Absolutely Floored that dismantling our AEA'S is even a discussion. In the time of crisis, any type of death of staff member, student or any crisis type event, our AEA professionals step in a moments notices to assist our entire districts. Our Administration, Counselors and staff members have been throughly trained in Crisis Response. Our teams have been trained by our AEA'S. I don't know what we would do with out that piece of the AEA alone. There are a Gazillion other crucial needs offered through our AEA's that districts, educators, parents and students rely Heavily on. Removing the immeasurable professional services to the districts supplied by our AEA'S would be a Crushing Blow to Iowa's Education System. Please destroy HSB542 Not our AEA'S.

Name: Ashleigh Maassen

Comment: AEAs havw so many resources and trainings available for teachers and schools in rural Iowa communities! They are vital for helping our schools have the resources needed for ALL students and teachers. I personally have attended numerous AEA trainings, contacted AEA for supports in the school, and gained ample additional resources through the various departments! Losing AEAs in Iowa would be detrimental to ALL Iowa school, students, and teachers. Keep AEAs fully funded, active, and alive in Iowa!

Name: Julie Anderson

Comment: Please consider how many children and families will suffer!This makes Iowa an archaic state!Let the professionals make these type of decisions for our children.This effects a huge amount of children and their families.

Name: Sarah Chaney

Comment: This bill is going to impact students, teachers, and schools in ways we cant even fathom at this point. Thinking SPED services will not change or be negatively impacted is extremely unrealistic. You are cutting major supports that are provided to ALL teachers, paraprofessionals, school administrators, general education students AND special education students. The concern regarding administrative

positions and salaries can be addressed in a MUCH different bill that wont completely kill the AEA and all the support it helps to provide rural districts. You MUST remember our state is not based on whats happening in Des Moines, Iowa City, Ottumwa, etc. Our state is made up of many smaller districts who would take the absolute brunt of this bill and be left stranded. Do not let the preferences and opinions of the bigger towns speak for all of Iowa. Also, increasing teacher salary is great, but doing it in one lump sum is not, and I am a school board member as well as an SLP hired by the AEA. Teacher salary should be in a completely separate bill.

Name: Michael Whitaker

Comment: I have grandkids that will be needing AEA support to further their education. I don't believe the school districts will have the ability to accommodate them without the AEA support. When I was in grade school I had only school provided services and I feel they were not fully equipped to give me full support, which led to issues in english and mathematics. If there was AEA support back then things might have been different for me. Vote NO.

Name: Kelly Schloss

Comment: As a former teacher, principal, Director of Learning Supports, AEA Math Consultant, and AEA Professional Learning and Leadership Consultant, I would like to express my opposition and concern with House Study Bill 542. As I reflect, on my more than 25 years of interaction with the AEA, the depth and breadth of services that they have provided to me as a professional, children in our state, and the larger community, is difficult to put in a concise message. Rather than narrate a long editorial, I will provide some bulleted items that have impacted me and our community during those years of service. * understanding Standards based grading, grading practices related to concept mastery, and determining milestones to know how students are approaching those goals. * support for schools during crises. I have been part of the teams who have responded to schools during community, disasters, and student deaths. * Learning and understanding about equitable practices for students in low socioeconomic situations, as well as students for whom English is a second language. * supporting districts of various sizes to create learning systems to ensure that all students have access to a Free and Appropriate Public Education. * As an administrator, AEA teams serving my buildings have helped me learn how to analyze student data, especially regarding social, emotional, and behavioral mental health. After analysis, I learned about appropriate responses to students to support them and their growth in these areas. * I have Masters degrees in Curriculum and Instruction as well as Educational Leadership. My knowledge in these areas, as well as practical experiences, continued learning by engaging in AEA courses and activities, and direct support from AEA to refine my skills and understanding of teaching and leadership practices, allowed me to better serve districts as a Professional Learning and Leadership Consultant. This included direct support to superintendents, curriculum directors, special education directors and district teams. *As a generalist consultant with a depth of learning and experiences, I have also worked closely with special education teachers (in many districts) and their AEA special education support teams to develop systems for behavior and wellbeing, design content curriculum progression for students with significant needs, design robust, measurable, and comprehensive learning plans for students and groups of students, design formative assessments to monitor student learning progress, design assessments to measure program effectiveness and student learning, support district leaders with the development of crisis and response plans, and facilitate district leadership teams to develop positive school culture and climate. Finally, a short story to leave you with. As a young Math Consultant, I was working with an upper elementary team of teachers to improve their practices. A teacher who was experiencing a paradigm changes looked at me and said, Are you telling me that what Ive been doing for the last 20 years is wrong? I replied, No. As we learn and grow as teachers, we do things differently. My second year of teaching didnt look like my first year, because I learned new and better methods. Thats how we are as

teachers. When we learn new methods, we shouldn't have guilt about our past practices, because we were walking in the light that we had at the time. The important thing to think about, is when you have new light, are you willing to walk in it? Elected officials, as you read the many notes from educators and citizens in Iowa who have received and provided services by our AEA systems, are you able to walk in the new light that may shine on your path? I hope so.

Name: Haley Edinger

Comment: I would like to address my concerns in regard to this bill. As a special education teacher, the AEA provides many resources and services. Not only for my students, but for myself and fellow teachers. Without the AEA, we would not have the strong supports of the specialized personnel that work within the AEA. I have taken numerous trainings from the AEA and have been trained in areas I couldn't have been trained elsewhere. The AEA staff have come in and supported our students through the challenges that they face and have allowed successes within their lives. I am in favor of teacher pay increases but I would rather make less money and have the AEA that supports and helps my students grow than to make more money but my students not have what they need. This bill needs to be reconsidered and have the students best interest first having the AEA to support them.

Name: S. Galligan

Comment: Denying access and creating inequity through the removal of resources that directly impact students and teachers will have irreversible consequences that will impact all communities. 1. Students and teachers need resources (Gen Ed and Sp. Ed), professional development, guidance, and in time supports in reading, math, and science. 2. Our class work has been shared at the Iowa State School Board conference (2022/2023). This work was a direct result of the collaboration between the classroom and AEA. Opportunities to work with experts around the globe would not exist without the hands on support from general education consultants at the AEA. 3. Our class work has been highlighted on the Iowa DOE website. Again, through the collaborative partnership with AEA, ALL students gain local and global insight on problems that impact their immediate and future world while creating solutions for solving these problems. 4. Our kids have had the opportunity to partner with local, national, global experts (ELA, math, and science) equipping them with the knowledge, mindsets and dispositions needed in order to navigate problems, develop solutions, and approach situations/people with a critical lens. This is possible because of the collaborative partnership with our general educational consultants from the AEA. Removing these resources (gen. Ed and sp. Ed consultants) limits and removes opportunities for students, and creates a gap between our current systems and the future ready systems Iowa believes they are constructing for our students. Reflect. Rethink. Reevaluate.

Name: Emma Bredberg

Comment: To whom it may concern, I hope this message finds you well. I am writing to share a deeply personal story about the invaluable support my family received from AEA (Area Education Agency). As a concerned parent and someone who has directly experienced the positive impact of AEA services, I am compelled to express my heartfelt support for their continued existence and support. Four years ago, my son was diagnosed with autism during an incredibly challenging time in my life. I was grappling with postpartum recovery, the loss of another child, depression, and the diagnosis of cancer for my grandmother my best friend. Amidst this turmoil, AEA became a crucial lifeline for us. The AEA early access professional who worked with us went beyond the call of duty. She not only helped my son navigate the challenges of autism but also provided essential resources and guidance that significantly aided me as a parent. From setting specific goals tailored to my son's needs to assisting with the transition process of establishing an Individualized Education Program (IEP) with the school, her support was instrumental. Upon my son turning three, aged out of early access services, and we transitioned to ABA (Applied Behavior

Analysis) for a year and a half. While it had its ups and downs, the continuous support from AEA proved to be the anchor we needed. The dedicated professionals at AEA were not just about implementing programs; they genuinely cared about our wellbeing. My son, now in 1st grade, has made remarkable progress. This academic year marks the first without an IEP, and he no longer requires a one-on-one para at all times. AEA's contribution to this success story is immeasurable and will always share with everyone! I vividly recall an afterhours call to my son's speech therapist during a moment of crisis. She provided invaluable guidance, demonstrating the unwavering commitment of AEA professionals to the families they serve. Even four years later, she remains a source of support, reinforcing the lasting impact of AEA's involvement. AEA is not merely a bureaucratic entity; it is a lifeline for families navigating the challenges of autism. Their genuine commitment to changing lives for the better goes beyond a job; it is a mission. As you consider matters related to AEA, I urge you to recognize the indispensable role they play in shaping better futures for families like mine. Thank you for your attention and understanding. Sincerely, Emma Bredberg Moorhead, IAPruett.emma12@gmail.com 7125920445

Name: Michelle Schaeffer

Comment: I have emailed my senators and representatives concerning the bill that is proposing AEA reform. I have several concerns regarding this bill. My first concern is that Governor Reynolds is already posting job openings for DE positions when the bill has not been discussed or voted on in session. This makes me feel as if the legislative session is just a formality and that the decision has already been made. I felt that way last year with the school voucher bill as well. This is not the way our democratic system of government works! Please do your due diligence in going through the process that is your duty as a representative of the people you serve. As a 29-year veteran teacher in Iowa, I have utilized AEA resources and services every year to support my students and help them get the services they need. These are services that would not be available if each district had to pay for and provide them individually. My goal as a teacher is to help ALL of my students achieve and reach their greatest potential. I have utilized the media center and materials, speech services, school psychologists, behavior specialists, reading and math consultants, science consultants, early childhood consultants, and early access specialists to help the students I have served. Like you, it is my job to do my due diligence and find the best resources available. This is made much easier by being able to contact the AEA for their guidance and expertise. I have also had the opportunity to engage in professional learning through the AEA system, both as a teacher and during my time as an instructional coach. This professional development has helped me grow as a professional and has helped me be the best teacher possible for my students. I hope you will consider how the Governor's proposed bill will affect ALL of Iowa's students. The AEAs were designed to support more than special education students, but many of these supports will go away under the proposed legislation. Thank you for your time and consideration. Michelle Schaeffer Lewis Central Community Schools

Name: Rebecca Eick

Comment: As an AEA employee, I am asking to please reconsider this legislation. I cannot support a bill that removes valuable services made accessible to Iowa students, families, and educators.

Name: Jill Payne

Comment: Please vote no for HSB 542! As a parent of a hearing impaired child, I can't tell you how important and impactful the services of our local AEA were for our family. Our daughter, Isabel, was born with little to no hearing in her left ear. She has never passed a hearing screen in that ear. From the moment we found out she had hearing loss, to receiving her hearing aid, to sending her to her first day of school, our local AEA was there for us. No one else in our family has hearing loss. The information and education provided for us as parents by our AEA consultant (Michelle Pandian)

was vital to us being able to understand our daughter's needs and care for her. We went from feeling completely alone, helpless, and disappointed in our daughter's diagnosis, to being informed, educated, and excited to help her thrive with her hearing loss. Michelle came to our house and taught us how to help her learn and grow despite her hearing loss. She worked with Isabel as an infant, toddler, and preschooler. She even worked with our other two children to help them understand and interact with Isabel. There aren't even words to adequately convey to you what the partnership with our AEA meant for our family during this time. I know my words here are not doing it justice. Isabel is a happy and thriving 2nd grader now. She knows how to cope without hearing in her left ear. She knows how to advocate for herself. She knows how to talk to others about her hearing loss and has even helped two classmates who were recently diagnosed with hearing loss to understand what it means, what it looks like, and that it is not something that can limit their potential! All of this started and is because of the support and benefit of our local AEA. As a teacher, I was transformed by a partnership with Kim Wise, an AEA consultant and Dr. Brian Hand from the University of Iowa. Working with Dr. Brian Hand and Kim and being trained in the Science Writing Heuristic has had the biggest impact on me as a teacher in my 20 years of teaching, as it completely transformed my philosophy on teaching. It showed me that all students are in charge of their own learning and the most important thing I can do for them, and for me, is to get them talking. Only when they know and I know what they are truly thinking for themselves, can we plan where to go next and move forward in our understanding of the concept together. And not only did this impact my teaching of science, but it impacted my teaching of math and everything else as well. It helped me understand how students learn and how I as a teacher can best help them move forward from wherever they are right now in their understanding and move them forward. This partnership also allowed me to meet other people from around the state, country, and globe who were all as passionate as I was to be better in our roles as educators every year. I was able to deliver professional development to teachers in my own district, as well as other districts across the state and I was able to be a part of the Iowa Space Grant Consortium Partner School program, which allowed me to not only tour several NASA sites, but also to be a part of a professional learning community, immersed in the actual learning and pedagogy of inquiry based teaching and learning. I made connections and built relationships with educators/professors at Iowa State University and NASA employees. Those relationships have continued to grow and now those colleagues virtually connect with my students each year to consult on various areas of our science curriculum, including our force and motion. Our students connect with them, ask them questions about their work, education, and passions in science. They also ask for feedback on their investigation processes and how to tweak their end of the year rockets to make them fly farther. None of this would have been possible without the local AEA's and their partnerships both with schools and beyond. I would not have made these connections, shifts in learning and teaching, and partnerships and friendships without my AEA connection first. The Area Education Agency plays a crucial role in supporting and enhancing the educational experience for students and educators alike. It serves as a vital resource for smaller districts, where funding is already more limited. All of our students, staff, schools, and families NEED ALL parts of the AEA!!!

Name: Michelle Gillespie

Comment: I am writing with much concern and opposition to House Study Bill 542. I have worked in education as a teacher for 31 1/2 years and the resources that the AEA provides have been SO VALUABLE to me as both an elementary and early childhood special education teacher. Hardly a day goes by in my classroom that I don't have something borrowed and in use from the GHAEA media center. The media center has great books, hands-on kits for learning, and even digital resources that can be used with my interactive classroom TV. The AEA van delivery is such an efficient means to send out and return items that I have borrowed for use in my classroom. There is no way that these resources could even start to be replaced or

purchased for use in my classroom. Also, as an early childhood special education teacher, I rely very heavily on the support and expertise of the AEA early childhood consultant and the professional development opportunities that the early childhood consultants provide for me and my team of teachers and paras. And, the required yearly online trainings (such as Bloodborne Pathogens training) that the AEA offers are also important for me as an educator and for my school district. The AEA laminating services are also very important to me as an educator. In the last 14 1/2 years as I have served in my capacity as an early childhood special education teacher, I have been able to work with AEA Early Access providers and numerous families as we transition children over to schoolbased IEP services. Please take time to study this bill and look at its negative consequences to educators and our education system in Iowa. I have always prided myself in being an educator in Iowa and all the resources that are available to us through our AEA's. Please leave our AEA's alone and let them continue to provide all the valuable services that they currently provide to education in Iowa! Thanks for your prompt attention to this concern?
Sincerely, Michelle Gillespie, Early Childhood Special Education Teacher,
Fremont Mills Community School

Name: Andrew Post

Comment: The proposed changes to the AEA are abhorrent and will have a detrimental effect for ALL schools and students in the state of Iowa. I see the hard work and vital resources they provide to rural schools who would not be able to afford the same services through private companies. The proposed bill poses a significant threat to the quality of education our children receive. Eliminating educational services, media, and technology support means a direct reduction in resources available to students, hindering their ability to access essential learning tools and information. This will have a DRAMATIC impact on students and schools, especially rural schools as schools will have to find funds, resources, and staff to pay for these services. Special education students are general education students first and always, so removal of services is a removal of services for ALL students. I ask that you vote no to these changes. AEAs are VITAL to our schools and future of our state. Anyone who claims to care about children and our education system should absolutely vote NO to this bill.

Name: Therese Halbur MD

Comment: I would like to express my opposition and concern with House Study Bill 542. As a Pediatrician in Iowa for 35 years who has worked extensively with children with every disability under the sun, our AEA are an invaluable resource for our children, families, teachers, and physicians who try to find help for those who need the most resources. It is true that many kids benefit from private therapies, but many also cannot afford those services. It is also most effective if they can be delivered where children learn and can help schools and teachers learn to implement services into their curriculum. Years ago AEA's did even much more as far as testing and working with students, but gradually their funding and then ability to do their best has been restricted. Of course by underfunding them, we can eventually show they have problems. Senator Grassley was instrumental in helping form the Iowa AEAs that brought services to the far reaches of our state. It was visionary then and still is, we need to fund them more, rather than break them up. Help them do a better ongoing job of helping families and teachers and children.

Name: Crystal Denton

Comment: As both a parent and teacher I ask that you say no to this bill. The AEA provides opportunities to our families and teachers. The support that teachers receive are phenomenal and benefit the students in our classroom. I started out a special education paraprofessional and went back to school to obtain my teaching certification. I have had the chance to work with AEA members and am in awe of their resources and dedication to serve families, students, and teachers. They take a good chunk of work off the shoulders of teachers that are already overworked. The

govern spoke of literacy outcome numbers, those numbers and standing at a national level. If AEA services are dissolved you can most certainly guarantee that the literacy numbers will fall. The AEA provides so many literacy resources. I use the book check out resources to help teach a current skill/standard and for read alouds with my students. The support I have received from our local AEA rep has helped several students gain the resources they need. My daughter currently receives speech services through the AEA. The leaps and bounds she has made would not have been possible without their services. Knowing that I have someone fighting for my daughter has eased the workload and stress I carry. If you take away the resources they provide you can count on more teachers leaving the profession and decrease in scores in all subject material. I stand with the AEA, as should you! Vote no to this bill. If you really want to know what kind of work they offer, ask to see them in action, go into the schools and witness the impact they have. In action

Name: Rachel Bohnsack

Comment: Hello,I wanted to reach out to express my concern of this bill that will eliminate many very valuable resources for me personally in my classroom and for all other educators and students. As a rural school district some of these resources will be challenging and nearly impossible to get access to if they are taken from the AEA. For example we have multiple kids this year with AAC devices (augmentative and alternative communication) in Kindergarten. I would be lost without Claire Pittman our speech pathologist who has helped me learn to use the AAC device. As well as helped myself and our special education teacher make many core boards (visuals) to help kids follow along with stories as I am reading to them. If I have a student who is struggling with a certain language issues but doesn't qualify as needing an IEP she will still support me by providing resources so I can best help the child. And so many other examples! Along with class sizes at 26, 26, and 25. Multiple kids with individualized education plans. Many kids who do not have an IEP but need other services 504s, talented and gifted, behavior interventions, tiered instruction, and the list goes on. Lets go back up to the 26 kids. On a day to day basis I get interrupted for bandaids, a well needed hug, a lost crayon, bloody nose, Joey trying to pinch Susie, being hungry, someone crawling under the table, the technology won't work, the list goes on. Not to mention the standards that are for Kindergarten are what used to be first grade for us. So much more demanding mentally and physically for these little minds. But I am here teaching because I love these kids and want what is best for them. Even though I don't agree with the push from the way top of our Education system on these standards, I am here because I want to make a difference and speak up for what is best for the kids and the educators who want to help them learn, grow, and become their own individuals. The kids are our future! Taking these resources away is not what is best. And the curriculum, behaviors, parent communication, social emotional learning, and many other parts of the day for 26 kids, it just doesn't allow us as teachers the time to be great at all of it. Could we maybe manage, yes, but would it be what is best no. I also personally have used the AEA for trainings to keep me up on changes in health protocols, changes in standards for the state, and continuing my education to be a forever learner. We need each other and the burnout is already very real and affecting many if not all. I hope you can advocate for us. Sincerely,Rachel Bohnsack

Name: Donovan Hill

Comment: To whom it may concern,I am a teacher in Bondurant, and have seen the benefits that AEA have provided to students. I am alarmed by this dismantling of education that is happening in Iowa. The AEA provides supports to special education students and also all students. Our job will be harder without the work of the AEA. If you care about education then you will oppose this bill unequivocally.

Name: Neil Gross

Comment: As parents to four daughters, the proposed bill is concerning to us for a multitude of reasons, some of which are listed below:While attending preschool, our daughters'

ECSE teachers were directly supported by Early Childhood Consultants through the AEA. After following up with previous and current teachers, during each year of attending school our daughters' teachers have had the ability to order through the AEA Media net and have content specific materials to enhance student learning. The AEA has provided hearing screening to each of our daughters. Including our youngest daughter who is two, being able to have her hearing checked at the local AEA office. Our daughters speak very highly of Amplify, TitanClub, and Bookflix, which are media resources provided to the school district through the AEA. Their classroom teachers also have kits specific to learning themes and STEAM kits available throughout the school year. The Harlan School District elementary is currently receiving LETRS training through the AEA. This has a direct impact on our daughters' learning as their teachers are able to hear the most current and effective strategies for helping kids learn to read. In addition to the training, the AEA literacy consultants have assisted the district with how to best support students who fall below benchmark. Our middle daughter is in a tier 2 intervention for learning to read, and it is extremely comforting to know that her teachers and interventionist are trained in the most current and effective way of teaching kids to read. Our oldest daughter has been involved in the Talented and Gifted program, which is highly supported by Green Hills AEA. Her teachers have been able to consult with AEA consultants who specialize in supporting kids with unique needs and it is because of that level of care that Hadley is engaged and thriving in school. As you can see, the AEA has directly impacted the level of education that our children have received. It is devastating to imagine the impact this bill would have on the education of our daughters for years to come. Harlan Community Schools are just that... a community. And our community is better because of the localized AEA being a part of it. Class sizes at the district and responsibilities of classroom teachers rise each school year. Our daughters, their teachers, support staff, and the school district deserve all of the support they can get.

Name: Jana Madsen

Comment: Please vote no to this bill. The AEA is a vital resource and is critical to the success of our teachers, students, and public education system. My two sons have BOTH taken advantage of AEA services in the past. The continued erosion of our public school's funding and resources will only limit the ability of teachers and reduce the academic proficiency and advancement of our state's children. We should be investing in our children and public schools, instead of cutting funds and programs, which makes it harder and harder for them to perform and succeed.

Name: Cynthia Waitt

Comment: Please vote no on House Study Bill 542. Educators, parents, and students in Sioux City and across the state rely on these vital services provided.

Name: Katherine Eastin

Comment: To whom it may concern, I am in opposition to this new bill effecting the AEA'S. I am one of 2 teachers working in a 612 science department. The only time I can work with and collaborate with other science teachers teaching the same classes I teach is during our science network time through our AEA. A group of science teachers work together a few days a semester to build standard online curriculum, talk about data and discuss teaching resources. Without this network I wouldn't be able to discuss curriculum with other teachers at a centralized location. I also use the resources and technology available at our AEA. I rent out the digitarium yearly to motivate and capture the curiosity of my students. I'm also planning on taking the computer science classes taught at our AEA the next few semesters to attain the computer science endorsement. Losing all these resources and collaboration days with other science teachers will directly effect my abilities to teach and motivate my students. I hope the committee will reconsider and keep the AEA'S open and providing instruction and resources to the teachers especially in small districts like mine. Thank you for your time, Katie Eastin

Name: Rachel Ertz

Comment: Please vote NO on HSB 542. Area education agencies provide school districts and families resources that are truly invaluable. As a school counselor in the Norwalk Community School District I see first hand the socialemotional, academic, and behavioral support the AEA provides to students, as well as professional development and various materials they provide teachers. Our AEA staff were the first ones to provide support to Perry when tragedy struck. This is NOT the time to strip resources from our schools. Our students and teachers deserve so much better do the right thing and vote NO.

Name: Stacy McInerney

Comment: I urge you to oppose HSB 542, as it poses a significant threat to public and private education in Iowa. Despite assurances from the governor, the impact on disability services is undeniable. The proposed changes could lead to legal challenges and logistical challenges in reallocating students with IEPs and IFSPs. Additionally, the bill overlooks the integral role of AEA system branches, such as media/technology and educational services, which benefit all districts. The potential job loss, estimated at 3,400 Iowans, would not only affect individuals but also have economic repercussions and influence public opinion on legislators. Your consideration of these issues is crucial, as the longterm effects on education and the community may be profound.

Name: Michele Marvin

Comment: To whomIt may concern, I am writing in regards to Bill 542. I have two children on IEPs that have utilized services from AEA. One of our children has more needs than the other. When our son was diagnosed with autism, we were lost! As parents and hearing those words we didnt know what was next. The amazing AEA individuals helped us. We began speech, OT, and they even helped get him into 3 year old preschool. We dont even know that was a thing!! They lured us up and guided us in early intervention! If these services get taken away, that will impact so many families. Families that cant afford to take their child anywhere else. Is that really fair? Is taking these services away going to help you sleep at night! I sure hope not!! We need to do better as a state for our special needs population!! So step up!! Do better and show you do care!! Dont take away services to those who need it!!

Name: Kathy Shannon

Comment: Good afternoon: I have major concerns with HSB 542, and am asking for a no vote on this bill. As the parent of an adult child who had significant speech concerns at the early age of two, and who worked successfully with multiple Heartland AEA speech pathologists. As a paraeducator in an elementary school I see the value of our Heartland AEA teams daily. Their kindness, creativity, and caring make the difference in the lives of so many children. All children in Iowa are impacted by the AEA's, using databases to enhance their learning, books that add to that biography project, as are the adults who also benefit from classes for recertification. Our AEA's are necessary on so, so many levels, and their value increases with each new child they are able to assist.

Name: Megan Menary

Comment: As a parent of a preschooler who currently has an IEP and has benefited greatly just in his 1st year of school from the amazing AEA staff and program at Carlisle Elementary, its concerning to hear that these resources are in jeopardy of being taken away by proposed House Bill 542. Weve only experienced a fraction of what the AEA has to offer our child who has already over more obstacles in his life than most. Do better and be better for the students, teachers, paraeducators, and AEA staff members. VOTE NO FOR PROPOSED HOUSE BILL 542.Sincerely, Megan Menary

Name: Jeri Gibson

Comment: As an educator of 25 years, I have witnessed the countless ways that AEAs impact the children and families of our communities. Because of the AEA, children are able to receive the services they need years before they ever step through the doors of an Iowa school. Because of the AEA, students have access to speech services, mental health/trauma services, special education services, etc. We teachers are already struggling to keep up with the demands of teaching. Pile on the the mental health needs of our students and we are drowning. Please do not take away one of our supports that is allowing us to keep our heads above water.

Name: Shawn Jefford

Comment: Governor Reynolds please dont dismantle a very important part of our education system here in Iowa . I understand smaller government and I understand the need for oversight but this is out of control . Can things be streamlined and do we have room for improvement here in Iowa sure but dont mess with children and education. Im not here to waste your time just know I believe you can do something better than this option !

Name: Lesa Long

Comment: Please vote no on the House Study Bill 542 portion that addresses dismantling our AEAs! This would have such a negative impact on our schools.As a special education teacher for 23 years in 2 districts, AEA has been my unconditional support for students with Autism, MS,Down Syndrome, Behavior Concerns, SEL,Dyslexia and all other learning delays. These are the experts that help me find the resources for my students and families. They provide so many learning opportunities for teachers and families. I can't imagine what our educational system would be like without ALL parts of our AEA.Please consider our future, our students and do not do this.Respectfully, Lesa Long

Name: Ann Gadbury

Comment: I am writing to express my strong opposition to Bill 542, which proposes the removal of AEA services for students in Iowa. As a dedicated educator, I witness firsthand the invaluable impact these services have on students.Access to these services play a crucial role in supporting students, fostering an environment conducive to learning and development. Removing these services would adversely affect the educational journey of countless students, hindering their academic progress and future success.I urge you to stand against Bill 542, recognizing the profound importance of AEA services in shaping the educational landscape for our youth and the future of our community.

Name: Rose Hodgson

Comment: Please vote no on HSB 542! Area education agencies are an essential and critical component to our public schools. As a teacher in the Norwalk Community School District,I see every single day the benefit of the AEA services for both students and teachers. Dismantling the AEAs would be detrimental to the public school students of Iowa. immensely if HSB 542 passes. Please vote NO!!

Name: Skyler Hoyt

Comment: I beg you to vote no on this bill. I am a mother of two boys with developmental delays due to associated neurological disorders and AEA has come together with their school system and done so much for my 8 year old and I am looking forward to them helping with my three year old. The amount of effort put in by AEA members and the school together has been life changing for our family. The group effort to put plans and goals into place on the IEPs has made our oldest succeed so much more than he would without their care and dedication to his success. To see something be taken away is only going to affect it negatively. We need ALL areas of AEA to STAY!!!!

Name: Beth Campbell

Comment: As a lifetime educator in the state of Iowa, I am seriously concerned about the negative ramifications that HSB #542 will have on ALL Iowa students and teachers. An outstanding education requires the collaboration of experts in technology, media, innovation and social/emotional well being. AEA resources for all students, including special education students, need expertise in subject matter areas as well math, reading, social studies, science, computer science, etc. AEA provides not only professional trainings, but onsite school support. Teaching in the year 2024 is a highly collaborative experience where teachers and experts come together to constantly improve our craft in order to BEST equip and support students. I have had a front row seat to collaborating and learning from AEA experts in both the private and public educational settings over the last 40 years. As a result of AEA personnel and resources, our students have been able to collaborate and learn with others around the globe in order to demonstrate new learning in powerful and unique venues. Again, this is 2024! Without AEA resources and experts, our educational system will decline and go backwards.

Name: Carrie Hansen

Comment: I have worked in rural Iowa public schools for 10 years. Over that time, I have used the many classroom resources provided by the AEA most of which would be too costly for individual districts to purchase on their own. Over the past few years, I have seen AEA experts in technology, student supports and special education step in to fill the gaps left by the current staffing shortage. Without these supports, more students struggle and more teachers face the frustration of not being able to provide for their students. We need to continue to fund all AEA services to provide continued learning opportunities for ALL of Iowa's children.

Name: Amy Stone

Comment: I am reaching out, respectfully, to beg of you to consider the impacts of House Study Bill 542 on our Iowa schools, teachers, and STUDENTS! I am a veteran teacher in my 21st year in the College Community School District in Cedar Rapids. I started my career here straight out of college and have been a proud employee ever since. It has been a point of pride for me to know that I am in a district who champions students, and also to know I have an AEA in our "backyard" who fervently strives to support kiddos in our district. In my years as an educator, I have personally used nearly all of the services slated to be cut under this bill. I have obtained my coaching certification through the AEA, and on a regular basis take the mandatory reporter courses, OSHA/blood borne pathogen trainings, suicide awareness, and other required trainings through the AEA. I have used their printing, copying, and laminating services. As a new teacher 21 years ago, they provided endless support and trainings to my "rookie class" of teachers. College Community, and my elementary specifically, have benefitted from content specific (and research based) trainings to best serve our students based on data. We have had math and literacy trainings from the AEA, delivering content and instructional moves that are highly effective for improving student data. Our entire district was PBIS certified through a multiyear training provided by the AEA, and it is as a direct result of that training and implementation that our school has been able to develop common language for school expectations that help students be successful. All of the schools on our central campus have utilized, at some point, the crisis team services provided by the AEA when we have had the devastating loss of classmates or staff member. Our building has utilized the graphic design services of the AEA for common area posters and other school signage. Many teachers in my building have used the free traveling library service to enhance content area topics in the classroom. We also send electronic login passwords/access to families every year for ebooks and other resources that can be accessed at home. While I have not personally used early intervention services, I do know numerous families who have used, and benefited greatly from, these services. Early intervention is crucial to setting up kids for school

success, and for helping families who feel lost in how to best help their children. The idea of cutting these services for ALL students and Iowans is truly BEYOND my comprehension. It saddens me greatly to think of the loss of these services and programs, and the jobs of those who are highly qualified to deliver them. I have always prided myself on being an IOWA educator. Knowing we have always been on the forefront of educational movements to help students. Cutting this sets back the work we have done on an immeasurable level. Please, please, please use your voice, and the voice of your constituents, to continue to ensure success for Iowa's STUDENTS by KEEPING Iowa's AEAs strong and complete as they are! Thank you for your critical consideration.

Name: Michelle Elgin

Comment: Dear Lawmakers of Iowa, I am concerned with the proposal by Governor Reynolds regarding changes in the AEA system and encourage you to reconsider. As a mother of a special needs son and rural family medicine physician, I have seen firsthand the good work of the Area Education Agency. The AEA has helped my son with cerebral palsy through his entire life! They have helped with therapies (PT, OT and speech) for my son since he was a baby starting at six months of age and continue to this day at school. The Early Access program is an invaluable tool to get therapists and parent educators in the homes of struggling young children. When I have a young patient with a developmental concern, I can refer them and quickly have a therapist in the home accessing and then intervening. Currently even in my area of the state, evaluations with private therapies have many monthslong wait lists. A recent referral I made to pediatric OT was nearly a year out and speech was over 6 months to get in for an evaluation. At an early age, that wait time is devastating and can lead to irreparable damage and poorer development outcomes for these patients across their entire lives. These services are completed in the homes of these children which eliminates travel time, babysitters for siblings, gas money for travel, and time away from work for the parents. Additionally, the AEA services are free. This allows many families who would be unable to afford these services to get the care their children so desperately need. Many kids will be left behind if these services are eliminated or moved to the private sector. Once my son turned three, he received support from the AEA in school. They help with equipment, classroom adaptations, and technology, as well as continued therapies at school. Each special needs student has different needs. My son is bright but unable to write, speak, type, walk or eat. For him to receive an unrestricted education involves a lot of different equipment and technology. He has utilized the AEA technology services multiple times over his years as his access ability changed or technology advanced. I don't know how schools would do this without the AEAs. The AAC and computer tech my son has used is constantly changing and is not anything that any of the other students in his district use. How is each district supposed to keep up on these very specialized interventions? And is every school supposed to employ a person with this knowledge just in case they may have a student like my son? Having an AEA employee that can be consulted at multiple schools makes more sense both financially and logistically. Additionally, small rural schools may not have access to people trained in these specialty areas if the AEA is not available to provide the personnel. Within my son's classroom there is a wide variety of abilities and conditions. Governor Reynolds referred to concerns with test scores of special education children as a reason to cut or change the AEA. First, that is a false measure, many special needs students are limited in their educational abilities compared to their neurotypical classmates. Using standardized tests is not an adequate way to assess their progress. Each child has an IEP (individual education plan) which focuses on attainable goals for each student's ability. Looking at how each child is advancing with their IEP goals is a better judge of how the teacher and the AEA is doing. Many kids are not working on typical educational goals as their condition may limit their ability to read or ever achieve certain educational benchmarks. These students are typically working on behavioral, social or life skills instead. Those goals are NOT assessed in a standardized test yet are equally important to the education of that child. Those goals lead to improved

independence and safety in the community when they become adults. In addition, Governor Reynolds has used the NAEP assessment data as evidence of poor performance of students with IEPs. My understanding is that not every child takes the NAEP test and 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. How can this data then be valid and reliable to use to draw conclusions about the performance of students, teachers, or AEA workers? This data represents a sample size of less than 1%, yet this is how we plan to make decisions that will negatively impact many children, as well as many teachers who depend on the AEA services to help them do their jobs well. Additionally, the AEA helps schools build systems that allow for the very important support that special education students rely on. My sister works for the AEA as a School Improvement Facilitator. In her position, she works with schools to understand, plan, and build databased systems that allow for special education students to receive the services they need, as well as to stack needed services across their day. Schools have traditionally not been built to provide very specific needbased services to students to meet their varying needs. My sister works with schools to use their data and build systems, so all kids get what they need. Further, these systems also support students who have not reached the special education system yet. These systems are built to catch students before they ever get into trouble with reading, math, attendance, social skills, and much more. Without people like her going into schools, these systems would not be built and kids like my son would not be able to receive the support they need throughout their day. Governor Reynolds would like to do away with this school improvement work completely even though it is very tightly tied to the outcomes of all students but especially those like my son who have many needs. Additionally, school improvement consultants like my sister work with schools who have been identified as in need of assistance. Who will help schools with this important work when they are already struggling and do not have the specialized knowledge or training in house to build systems and make needed changes. The AEA's provide many services to schools in Iowa and many of these services intertwine to support the whole child. When you take a piece like school improvement away, the overall support suffers a great deal. Finally, the AEA helps schools with curriculum and professional development. This is another area a School Improvement Facilitator like my sister contributes a great deal to the schools she works with. Again, it is not financially or logistically feasible to expect every school to offer or employ teachers with advanced training in curriculum and other specialized interventions. Being able to consult an outside AEA specialist and develop a plan to intervene with schools and students that are struggling again seems to be a way to pool resources. This is especially difficult for our small rural schools that have a limited pool of prospective highly trained employees, as well as very few resources to offer if they were hired. Most of the schools in our state are located in rural areas. It doesn't seem right that where a child is born might dictate the type of education he or she is able to receive. All our kids deserve the best education Iowa has to offer, whether they are a farm kid from a tiny town or a city kid from someplace like Des Moines. As a lifelong Iowan and a product of a small western Iowa rural public school, I urge you to please reconsider these plans for the health and education of my son, my patients and future Iowa students. Sincerely, Michelle Elgin, DO Vinton, Iowa

Name: Shannon Bean

Comment: I am writing to you as a 17 year, Iowa teacher on behalf of Iowa AEAs. I'm concerned about reducing so many programs in our AEAs. Many of these programs and services are ones that I have used in the past and continue to use for my professional development and for my students. I regularly check out books each month for my students to read. My students look forward to a fresh selection of books each month that we borrow from the Mississippi Bend AEA. When I was a kindergarten teacher I frequently let my students listen to books on Bookflix and as a 3rd grade teacher I have utilized TrueFlix to help students research topics. I have also undergone a lot of professional development through the AEA. Courses over

standards, workshop models, PBIS (positive behavior intervention support), etc. It is so beneficial and helpful to have experts on various educational topics and resources that can be utilized and shared amongst other districts in our area through the AEA. Please be cautious in discussions cutting supports for teachers. Teaching is both challenging and rewarding, but like mechanics need the right tools to do their job well, so do teachers. The AEA is a resource/tool that we need.

Name: Carrie Hansen

Comment: I have worked in rural Iowa public schools for 10 years. Over that time, I have used the many classroom resources provided by the AEA most of which would be too costly for individual districts to purchase on their own. Over the past few years, I have seen AEA experts in technology, student supports and special education step in to fill the gaps left by the current staffing shortage. Without these supports, more students struggle and more teachers face the frustration of not being able to provide for their students. We need to continue to fund all AEA services to provide continued learning opportunities for ALL of Iowa's children.

Name: Linda Spencer

Comment: To whom it may concern: I am writing to oppose HSB542. I have been in education for almost 30 years in the state of Iowa. As a classroom teacher, the AEA provided professional development for us in the areas that we identified as need areas. The learning was always research based and as a teacher, I was confident that I was keeping up to date on the most recent research that supported my instruction in reading, math, science, and social studies. This in turn was passed on to my students. As an former administrator, the AEA were a tremendous help and provided timely resources as I was navigating the new role as a building leader! It was easy to contact someone via phone or email and they were always quick to respond. Taking away this valuable resource will only HURT small districts in Iowa. Rural districts struggle to access the needed services for students, families, and staff. With the AEAs, they are able to get many of those services provided to them in a timely manner. I urge you to vote NO on this bill!!! If this passes, it WILL set education back. Of that I am sure! I appreciate all the hard work and time that you put into your job and the thoughtfulness you are putting into the impacts of this bill.

Name: Sydney Zimmerman

Comment: To whom it may concern, I believe as an educator in Iowa that the AEAs are vital to the functioning of all schools in the state of Iowa. They provide many opportunities to all students in all aspects of their lives. As an educator I get the opportunity to teach a new science curriculum given to us by the AEA. It has been wonderful for all the students and they are enjoying science. They are engaged and making connections like I have never seen before. If the house bill 542 were to pass this would take away my opportunity to teach this curriculum unless my district is willing to pay \$10k to keep it going. This will not only be unfair for my students but it is a lot of money to ask a district to spend. There are many more opportunities that the AEAs provide that my students use. They get mental health services, therapy, reading support, math support, etc. without AEAs schools will change in a way that will no longer be beneficial to students through and knowledge. Iowa schools NEED AEAs.

Name: Attie Stymiest

Comment: I am writing you today to let you know how much impact the AEA has had in my children's lives. I have three small children ages 6, and 3 year old twins. Our first encounter with AEA was with my oldest son not speaking more than 5 words at age 2. We were referred to the AEA by our family pediatrician and within a week someone had reached out about an evaluation. He still is receiving speech services today with his IEP at school. The AEA has offered us so much support and guidance through his journey. My twins were born prematurely at 35 weeks. With that also

comes many development delays. They had services with the AEA beginning around 6 months. They had issues with mobility and speech and the sweet therapists and teachers who came to our house were so helpful. They helped give us the tools to get them walking and talking and 6 months ago released them into the world as normal toddlers. I know that would not be the case without the help of the AEA. The state of Iowa needs to continue these services for children and families like mine. It would be such a disservice to these kids and the education system. The schools need the AEA!! Thank you for your time, Attie Stymiest

Name: Tami Plein

Comment: All services the AEAs provide are necessary and valued. While I support the increase in teacher pay, that could have been funded with the dollars that have been funneled to private schools that DO NOT serve students with special needs or gifted students. The AEAs provide the critical support for these students that districts cannot. Please remember that math, science, and language arts are all core learning. As a former middle and high school science and math teacher, I utilized the services of those consultants EVERY year to improve my instruction. They had the expertise and experience that I didn't. Without them I wouldn't have had the opportunity to grow in my practice. And the cost for me and my district? Less than \$25 compared to hundreds from a university or for profit provider. Removing these services places yet another financial burden on our public school teachers and their district. One quick example is science PD. AEA science consultants provide this INDISTRICT as part of their contracts. If a district goes with another provider it costs thousands. And AEA consultants can customize for teachers and districts because they KNOW them. Work with them on a long term basis. Outsourcing this is not cost effective or research based for supporting this change. I oppose this bill for all these reasons and more. Please contact me if you would like to talk more about keeping all service that AEAs provide.

Name: Larry Marvin

Comment: I am opposed to HSB542 because it will destroy our AEA system which will have a negative affect on young persons in our communities.

Name: Johnna Hargens

Comment: I am 100% opposed to HSB 542. As a parent of a child with special academic needs, I cannot have the services that my son needs in order to be successful in the school system taken away. Without the services that he is receiving under his IEP, he would become another statistic! He would not be earning the grades that he has now and would lose all confidence in his ability to succeed in a formal classroom education. I never knew how important programs that the AEA provided were until I had a child that needed them. My brothers benefited from them too growing up as they both struggled. What makes matters worse in smaller rural schools such as the one my son attends (Underwood) would be more negatively affected. We purposefully chose this school and district because they were able to provide the resources he needs and in a smaller school/district area. PLEASE do not wipe away everything we have worked so hard to help our child obtain to be successful!! A reorganization is sometimes necessary and makes sense, but I do not see how this is a reorganization but more of a demolition of services. Who will provide these? How will families access them especially if not provided in the school setting? There are larger and more longstanding consequences that I do not believe have been thought through. Please remember that children are our future and if we do not provide the best setup and opportunities for them, there will be no future. We wish we could all fit in a box, trust me my son wishes he did, but he's unique and he thinks and learns differently. Please do not penalize him for that. I thank you for taking the time to read this and to vote NO on this bill.

Name: Audrey White

Comment: I strongly oppose HSB 542 as it is currently written. I support the increase in teacher

wages, however, dismantling the AEAs has tremendous implications for the future of our children. The Every Student Succeeds Act states that ALL students are to be provided quality education. Every child is a general education student first. The AEAs support all teachers and staff through professional development, providing resources and strategies for tiered interventions (keeping students in the least restrictive environment), along with supporting our special education teams. This bill will only lead to unnecessary competition amongst agencies and private companies and will result in a drastic decline in evidencebased and quality educational services. Our children and schools deserve better.

Name: Abby Berger

Comment: I am in support for better teacher wages. I am not in support of dismissing the services and resources of our AEA. The AEA does tremendous work in the state of Iowa for both our state educators and Iowa students. Loosing this service would have a negative impact on both. Please reconsider this bill in its entirety!

Name: Sara Kane

Comment: I would love me to express my strong opposition to the HSB 542. It seems so unfair to take away these programs that give parents with a child with a disability hope. I have spent years working before I retired as a Family Educator Coordinator at GWAEA. I saw how the dilated some of these families were. Many a time, I would hear from a parent that they were so grateful he/she was that they had someone they could go to to ask questions, to feel supported and encouraged to advocate for their child. I would encourage everyone who is making decisions regarding this bill, to get in touch with a family with a member who has a disability that makes life (school) challenging. Life is hard for these families, please do not take away the support they have now through the AEAs. Thanks for having empathetic heart.

Name: Abbie Schaffner

Comment: I don't even know where to start we have had Grantwood AEA in our lives since my son who is now 11 was 18 months. My son has non verbal autism and the AEA came to our home to help my son start communicating. Since then we have had a great amount of help from them at school. We have needed help with communication, behaviors and getting things in place for him to be able to learn in the way that he does. If we loose these services it would be absolutely devastating for our family and so many others. The teachers and associates talk to them daily if not every other day for help and added guidance. The AEA has been instrumental in how far my son has come with his communication device and his education. There is no other system in place to help our children. Getting rid of the AEA would be giving up on so many children! What about the no child left behind law? How do you expect these children to be able to succeed to there fullest abilities by getting rid of the one service that is doing just that?

Name: Jennifer Christensen

Comment: I strongly oppose HSB 542 as it is not beneficial to Iowas students. The AEAs provide valuable services and staff especially to rural districts that cannot be provided otherwise. This bill will be detrimental to our students and Iowas educational systems.

Name: Kristie McCarthy

Comment: Please protect our AEA system and vote no on HSB542. The AEA is a critical component of our educational system in Iowa and the loss of so many key services will have longlasting, detrimental impacts on our children, our families, our teachers, and our schools. The AEA, and particularly, the Early Access program, was a life saver for my family when our infant son, Cole, was diagnosed with a stroke at birth and subsequent hydrocephalus. Until you have been in the shoes of parents like us, you cannot possibly know how important the AEA is. They came into our home and

provided us with critical support and developmental tools we desperately needed and they have continued to support our son throughout his schooling. Without their help, there is no doubt our son would not be where he is today. Before you consider stripping down this extremely valuable system, please educate yourself on the impact this will have. Talk to families, talk to teachers, talk to school administrators. Watch this video about our son. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3W6zEO9HuVY&t=13s> Thank you for your time. Kristie McCarthy

Name: Debra Jewett

Comment: When you have a baby you read books on what to expect to get prepared for being a new parent. You have dreams. When I was blessed with my son we were so excited! He was healthy and such a good baby! When he was 1 year old I started to notice some things that were different. He did things with his hands and words were not easy. I went to AEA, I told them and asked them can u help me teach my son in a different way. They started coming to our home 1x a week. I watched, learned and applied what they were doing for my son. They told us he had Autism. WE HAD NO IDEA what that was, like sooo many people. We had 2 ladies coming into our home teaching not just our son but US! We had read books on what to expect on having a baby but not having a baby with autism. There is NO book to read what we were going to be going through. When he turned 3 he started school and we learned even more! PICS to communicate and sign! It has been a long, hard journey but Ashton has made huge leaps and we are graduating this year! I have had AEA by my side through it all! Im beyond grateful for the services, the people! I could NOT imagine not having them! We have enough struggles and forks in the road, we do not need things taken away from our special kids, WE NEED MORE! I never thought I would have to beg for help, for services, for inclusion! Ashton has been my greatest teacher! He is nonverbal. Im his voice! Please open your eyes & hearts.

Name: ann Marie Dworzynski

Comment: I support the teachers with a raise. The concerns regarding privatizing services of the district ability ops out of the AEA services will impact students and families OT/SLP and PT use evidence base practices to focus on educational needs in the least restrictive environment. This is a concept that most private Therapy companies do not understand. It will actually blur the lines of educational base needs, and Home needs for students. if private companies are serving students in the school district, there will be quite a few conflict of interest regarding educational needs, and Home needs. I dont think districts will fully understand the impact of opting out of the AEA and using private services. The private services are for profit and actually will end up costing the districts more money than they realize. The volume of kids that will be over identified for OT PT and Speech services, will be massive. If districts are not aware of how Therapy services work and contract Out to various private services the consistency of practice, and the collaboration needed will not occur. The ability for the AEA staff to collaborate together as a team is a significant need in order to be consistent with services For profit companies will look at the Bottom line regarding finances and not spend the time with students that are needed to collaborate With teachers parents, school, Psych, and anybody else that is needed for that student regarding educational needs in the least restrictive environment. in addition to all the services that are being cut districts, dont realize the impact this is going to have on them. Teachers rely heavily on the AEA without even realizing for instance, our distribution center. We have thousands of educationally relevant items that are students use on a regular basis. Often times we need to check out 3 to 4 items for teachers to trial with students before finding the right Item for them to use. This makes the difference of them being independent in the classroom and closing the gap between peers. Teachers rely heavily being able to check out things from the AEA And having The right support from the AEA to implement the item This is such an important bill that it should not Be looked upon lightly due to the Families and students that this will impact. it should not be rushed. We need to. assess how these cuts will affect students, Teachers, districts. Para educators and families .

Name: Kristin Schminke

Comment: My name is Kristin Schminke and I am a bereaved Mom and advocate for a son who had a rare disease (Metachromatic Leukodystrophy). I have recently heard of House Study Bill 542 that would affect services to families and schools with special needs. I would like to oppose this bill and share my personal experiences with AEA Early ACCESS with you. If it wasn't for Early ACCESS through AEA, our first year after diagnosis would have been a lot harder than it already was. Our Early ACCESS team quickly jumped in to help us get the resources and devices and care Grayson needed within weeks of being diagnosed. They were able to support Grayson with physical therapy, to help his already rigid tight muscles from his terminal disease. They provided walkers, standers, gait trainers, high low activity chairs, bath chairs, benches, and a special tomato chair with a mobile base. Switch adapted toys and most importantly of all a feeling that someone cares and is here to help guide us through this awful life changing disease. You see what is unique to our situation is Grayson was born a normal healthy child. None of us knew how rapidly he would regress and the tools and devices he would need so quickly. Ordering through a DME and insurance took weeks to months before you could get what you needed and by then Grayson's needs had changed again. AEA was able to support those rapid changes with their resources to equipment and devices. They helped us voicebank Grayson's beautiful voice. He was one of the youngest in the state of Iowa to be able to voice bank his voice and put it on a Tobii Eye Gaze device. If we weren't able to do this we wouldn't have been able to continue to hear his voice long after the disease took it from him. Early ACCESS AEA was and is very important to our family. Our son would be turning 8 next month but unfortunately he passed away from MLD two years ago this month. To this day our team still stays in contact with our family and always tells us how Grayson is always remembered in all their work. Iowa families NEED these services along with our school districts. Education and care would not be able to thrive without them. I invite you to join our journey and follow our Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1968880230016799/> If you go back to the beginning of our journey you will see how rapidly Grayson regressed. Since Grayson has passed my world has changed a lot. I used to work for USDA FSA for 17 years. I hung that hat up and I now work for Williamsburg Mary Welsh Elementary in the SPED room with Rose Driscoll and see at first hand all the other services that are provided by AEA that I did not need or utilize with my own son. These kiddos deserve all the care and help we can give to them. They can't help their disabilities but we can help them learn and thrive. I appreciate your help and ask that you please send me a response letting me know if you are able to oppose this HSB. Sincerely, Kristin Schminke 2808 W Dr Parnell, IA 52325 3195303459 "You never know how strong you are until being STRONG is your only CHOICE." Bob Marley

Name: Mary Connelly

Comment: Please vote NO on this bill. I am an Iowa (Council Bluffs) native, my father is a career Iowa educator, and I have a niece who benefited from multiple EAE services during her educational journey. I am now a licensed occupational therapist and I believe this legislation will negatively impact public education for Iowa students. While I support competitive pay for teachers, I implore you to support the longstanding structure of the AEA's so they can continue to support Iowa students and teachers.

Name: Sarah Dopson

Comment: I am opposed to this bill. Our students need all services provided by the area education agencies at present, if anything, these services should be expanded for additional mental health and behavioral services. I sincerely hope our state can do the right thing to take care of our kids and give them all of the chances to succeed.

Name: Aleria Nichols

Comment: Students and educators in Iowa need all parts of the AEA! I am currently in my 10th year as a Kindergarten teacher at Sidney CSD and my students and I have benefitted first hand from the AEA. I, along with my colleagues, often check out book kits for our classrooms, as well as receive professional development and classroom instructional support from knowledgeable AEA consultants. I am a better educator because of these individuals. Eliminating these positions will directly affect teacher quality as well as the quality of education students receive. It would be a disservice to all! I urge you to consider the thoughts of all parents and educators who have been supported by Iowa's AEAs. Sincerely, Aleria Nichols

Name: Nicole Miller

Comment: Im here to address my concerns over HSB 542. While the increase in teachers pay is something sorely needed in Iowa, the detriment felt by stripping the AEA is a terrible idea and will be felt statewide. I am opposed to the action towards AEA presented in this bill. Please review and put some thought into this bill. Meet with AEA members to work out a logical solution. This should not be handled under the table as it has been thus far. Thank you.

Name: Ashley Bartenhagen

Comment: To Whom It May Concern: I am an employee of Great Prairie AEA and am writing to you on behalf of the students, school districts, teachers, etc. that I serve to please vote no to HSB 524. I serve two different school districts this year as a SEBH (Social Emotional Behavioral Health) Interventionist. I have seen first hand the detrimental need that rural school districts have when it comes to mental health support. As an AEA, we have been able to go into schools and help meet the need of our students who need these services, but cannot access them due to money, transportation, the lack of providers in rural communities, etc. If this bill passes, it would leave rural school districts stranded when it comes to ALL supports that the AEA provides (literacy consultant, math consultant, science consultant, OT/PT, SLP services, mental health supports just to name a few)! This bill will cause a negative impact on ALL students! Let's think about our students FIRST they are our future and deserve to be supported as fully as possible!

Name: Patty Spahr

Comment: As the mother of 4 children in Iowa, I urge you to slow down HSB 542 until Iowans have a better understanding of how this bill will impact our children.

Name: Kacie Aistrophe

Comment: I would like to express my opposition to the AEA portion of HSB 542. While not against change, elimination of AEA services not associated with special education is not in the best interests of our students, staff, state, or nation. All funding not related to Special Education is set to be eliminated with this bill, leaving many, many districts, specifically rural districts and their teachers and students without needed educational supports. I have worked in 9 rural districts, where I have seen firsthand the AEA services utilized to better teach ALL students. The media center materials, teacher professional development and trainings, TAG supports, special education supports, etc. are invaluable, especially to the rural districts in our state that would not otherwise be able to afford them. Remember that all special education students are general education students first, and strong foundational classroom instruction is critical to student growth. Please reconsider this bill, as removing AEA supports is not the answer to boost progress across the state.

Name: Holly Henricks

Comment: To whom it may concern, I am very very opposed to HSB 542. As a school board member of a small rural district I am deeply concerned that the consequences of this bill will be devastating. I have learned over the last couple of years just how important the AEA has been to our schools. Their services are irreplaceable. Schools,

especially those already struggling, will not be able to give these students the services they desperately need. Teachers need increased pay but not at the expense of all children. I am sad that this is even a thought by our leaders. How can we even think to get rid of something so detrimental to the students, families and staff?! Please vote No. Thankyou

Name: Jenny Lidgett

Comment: The AEA has provided countless services for our child from Early Access up through her time now as a 5th grader in a rural district. Just this year, the general education teacher needed additional support and consultation on how to ensure our student's IEP could be met and the AEA was available. I sincerely oppose the passing of this bill, which would only hurt services for children more in the state of Iowa. The Department of Education is not equipped to provide the services that the AEAs offer. Even if the DE says they will offer services, it will not be timely enough as the red tape and implementation time for adding and providing services is not realistic. The Governor's idea of creating efficiencies is a pipe dream, pillow talk. This bill cuts library loan services, career development programs, training and certifications for coaching and substitute teaching, BBP training, subject area consultation, and that's not even the whole of it. It is too much for districts to cover so some them won't provide them and that's is heartbreaking for all of our students, just SPED. The impact to student well being, safety and educational success will be harsh. The deep cuts to services and supports will be detrimental to rural districts who have already significantly felt the pain of teacher resignations. Why are we giving educational staff more reasons to want to leave the educational field. I have worked in conjunction with AEA staff professionally as a former state of Iowa employee and personally as a parent. The dedication to education from AEA staff is second to none. I oppose this bill and hope that you vote against the bill before Governor Reynolds kills the rest of the Educational success of Iowa students.

Name: Debra Jewett

Comment: When you have a baby you read books on what to expect to get prepared for being a new parent. You have dreams. When I was blessed with my son we were so excited! He was healthy and such a good baby! When he was 1 year old I started to notice some things that were different. He did things with his hands and words were not easy. I went to AEA, I told them and asked them can u help me teach my son in a different way. They started coming to our home 1x a week. I watched, learned and applied what they were doing for my son. They told us he had Autism. WE HAD NO IDEA what that was, like sooo many people. We had 2 ladies coming into our home teaching not just our son but US! We had read books on what to expect on having a baby but not having a baby with autism. There is NO book to read what we were going to be going through. When he turned 3 he started school and we learned even more! Pics to communicate and sign! It has been a long, hard journey but Ashton has made huge leaps and we are graduating this year! I have had AEA by my side through it all! Im beyond grateful for the services, the people! I could NOT imagine not having them! We have enough struggles and forks in the road, we do not need things taken away from our special kids, WE NEED MORE! I never thought I would have to beg for help, for services, for inclusion! Ashton has been my greatest teacher! He is nonverbal. Im his voice! Please open your eyes & hearts.

Name: Judy Janning-Reicks

Comment: As a retired AEA employee, who served many rural districts, I know how much small schools depend on the AEA for schoolwide improvement in math and reading skills, media resources, consultation on instructional strategies, and cost saving professional development resources. Most of these small rural districts struggle to survive financially and can't afford costs of frequently bringing in educational resources from afar. These schools are the core of their communities and provide good basic education. They will suffer if this bill serves to further limit their survival resources.

Name: Kristen Johnson

Comment: Please vote NO on HSB 542. I am a mother of 4 children who have all attended public school in Iowa. All of my children have directly benefited from AEA services, including Early Access, speech, TAG support, media resources for their classrooms, and stronger instruction because their teachers received training and support from AEA consultants. Schools and teachers need the resources and supports provided by the AEA to help every student succeed. Please do not eliminate any AEA services.

Name: Kathryn Clinton

Comment: To whom it may concern: I would like to express my opposition and concern with House Study Bill 542. I am a 76 year old grandmother who has lived my entire life in rural SW Iowa. I am urging you to vote against HSB 542. I was so disheartened when I listened to our governor give her State of the State address in which she outlined the plan to do away with the many vital services provided by the AEA. Some of these services include: Access to books both physical and online, STEM Kits including robots, Crisis services, Technical services and digital learning, Career and technical education, Professional development for teachers, Speech and language services just to name a few. If passed this action will definitely have a negative affect not only on my grandchildren, some of whom receive critical speech services from the AEA, but, also, all students who attend Iowa's small rural schools. I have read where 3,111 people would loose their job, 90% of them women, if this bill is passed. I am not against fare wages for our teachers. It is so unfortunate that this issue has been combined with the plan to do away with AEA services in this bill. They need to be separated. Please let common sense and NOT politics prevail. Please keep the successful future of Iowa's children be your deciding factor in this mater.

Name: Kristi Hoskins

Comment: Please vote no to this bill! Iowa schools are critically reliant on Iowas Area Education Agencies (AEAs), rural schools in particular. AEA staff and programs serve as monitors for Department of Education requirements, consultants for academic programs, suppliers of curricular materials as well as Professional Development programs, and provide technology support for schooldistricts across the state. Most importantly, the AEAs provide direct support to special needs students, indisciplines that the vast majority of school districts are unable to provide, in positionssuch as Speech and Language Pathologists, Occupational and Physical Therapists, Audiology Specialists, and more. Students with Individualized Education Programsrequire specific and unique services that are provided by or overseen by AEA staff. The AEAs also provide many needed services for schools, just to name a few: emergency support when a district loses a superintendent or school business official midyear, virtual learning content, printing of materials at affordable fees, trainingwhen districts undertake new instructional math or literacy initiatives, crisis/emergencysupports and mental health services, among many others. In many instances, if it wasnt for the AEAs, rural schools would not be able to find orafford specialists to meet student needs or assist staff with the curriculum andmaterials necessary for student learning. Losing any of these resources would be a major loss to Iowa schools, educators, and students.

Name: Katelyn Walsh

Comment: I am writing today with strong opposition of HSB 542. In a review of federal legislature, this bill contradicts multiple components of the Every Student Succeeds Act passed in 2015: universal design for learning to meet the needs of ALL students, obtain input from parents and families as states create plans, and use of evidence based methods to help schools and students that are struggling. The negative impact a majority of this proposal would have on the state of Iowa is truly unfathomable. I had been a practitioner in the healthcare world for almost four years with a doctorate in occupational therapy. Feeling like my work was not meaningful in a broken healthcare model, I left with world of medicine to pursue a career path within the

school system. While I have only been in education for the past five months, I have truly felt the impact the AEAs have on students and educational systems as a whole. Just as managed care has done in the world of healthcare, this reform would absolutely destroy an essential tenet: the provider as an advocate for ALL students and educational staff. This bill would completely disrupt a system that provides highly necessary services for all learners from birth to age 21. This includes occupational therapy, speech language pathology, physical therapy, digital resources, curriculum consultants, crisis emergency support, as seen by a large, immediate, AEA coordination of counseling support in Perry in recent weeks, and the list goes on. All students are general education students first, and challenging an evidence based, effective model of providing supportive services within the least restrictive environment would have catastrophic consequences within Iowa's educational system. In a constantly changing world of technology, media technology support services for schools would be removed, leaving teachers to navigate these obstacles on their own. Supports including social emotional behavioral health would be no more. In a world where gun violence and threats have shattered school systems right here in Iowa, I can't think of a worse time to remove these vital resources. Districts will not be able to pay for each individual service provided collectively by AEAs, and rural districts will not survive without these supports in place. Teachers deserve better. Better pay, better resources, and safer environments to perform the essential calling of educating future Iowans. While the better pay proposed is a step in the right direction, the decreased resources available to teachers as individuals, and schools as systems, will lead to increased teacher burnout. And thus, turnover in districts that vitally need quality educators. I urge you to listen to the voices of fellow Iowans, and the stories of those that have been directly impacted by AEAs. Please help every student, teacher, and school system succeed by opposing this bill.

Name: Michael Maas

Comment: Hello and thanks for taking the time to read this. I would like to say that this bill sold not be passed as is. There are many students, school districts, teachers, community members, families and others who will be negatively affected from this bill. The AEAs have helped my wife and I during a difficult time with my son. He was acting out and being hurtful to others when he was younger. We were not able to get things figured out. We were finally connected with Central Rivers AEA and they were able to come to the daycare that he was in and make observations. After a few times observing him they suggested we get him into three year old preschool. So we were able to do that and while he was in school the AEA was able to come up with a plan to implement for him. He is doing much better today and the AEA was supportive during that time. As a naturalist with Buchanan County Conservation Board I know that I will feel the impacts as a professional. My coworker and I use the Star Lab which is available by Keystone AEA. The both of us have been taught how to use the lab by a friendly AEA instructional service member. There has also been collaboration with the AEAs on different topics like solar and wind challenges. They have been very helpful for these events. The last thing that they have been helpful with is content to help with classroom management and discipline. They have a corner dedicated to non traditional teachers. Without the AEAs help many of these programs will not happen, which would impact the program that I have with the county. I work with teachers on a regular basis being a naturalist. I know that they are constantly using resources from the Media portion of the AEAs. They also benefit greatly from the trainings that are provided from the great instructional services. We have even had some of those IS workers come and help at large field days! The AEAs help students with disabilities however all students benefit from the training that the teachers get, the media that is provided, and the other great programs they offer. Please consider this bill with a lot of thought. Please do not send this through as is because many students, teachers, school districts, families, and community members will feel this bill in many ways. This WILL NOT help our students!!

Name: Laurie Wirtz

Comment: I worked for a public school system in Iowa as a school nurse for 24 years. I saw firsthand the essential role the AEA had in the education AND health of students. The AEA is vital in supporting schools in making accommodations, so all students can access quality public education. I do not support Iowa House bill 542. Please support the education of all Iowa children and give staff the tools and resources they need to be successful.

Name: Steven Grund

Comment: As the parent of a 12 year old son with disabilities, I am opposed to the proposals in HSB 542. It is essential that he receive services through the AEA and his local school district, Dallas Center Grimes. I do not support dismantling Iowa's education system in favor of a disjointed delivery system. I support increasing teacher pay and believe it should be addressed as a separate issue. Thank you, Steve Grund 500 NW 8th St. Grimes IA 50111

Name: Maureen Mark

Comment: No to Bill 524! As career educator in Iowa for 30 years, I have had the opportunity to work with several different AEAs and feel I need to share how valuable the services and supports they offer to schools, students, and families from birth to 21 are in this state. As a teacher for the deaf/hard of hearing I am part of many teams that include OT, PT, SLP, Audiological, etc. services that coach families in their homes through Early Access and transition to school with services that meet their individual child's needs. Without these services, many of our rural families in southeastern Iowa would be lost and the children would not get what they need. As an educator I have received support with math and reading instruction from GPAEA from the consultants in those areas, used the media library materials, have borrowed technology, participated in professional development classes, etc. and can't imagine not having access to the expertise of the AEA staff in all those areas to support me as an educator. As a tax payer in Iowa I am happy to hear that the State has financial stability, so I am very concerned and confused as to why such drastic changes and reduction to the services our schools, families, and children are being proposed. Please do not let this bill become a law!

Name: Rachel Camp

Comment: To whom it may concern, I would like to express my opposition and concern with House Study Bill 542. The AEA provided my family with crucial education and therapies for our daughter Regan through their EARLY ACCESS program. When Regan was diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy in 2014, we would not have been able to provide her with the services she received such as her much-needed physical and occupational therapy without our local AEA and their EARLY ACCESS program. They provided so much knowledge and comfort during an absolutely terrifying time. Regan is now in 4th grade and on student council. She exceeds expectations every year. I truly believe our helpful start through EARLY ACCESS was a huge factor in Regan's successes. I strongly oppose taking this program away from our local families and children who absolutely need the education and therapies just this one program provides. Thank you, Rachel Camp.

Name: Lauren Walther

Comment: I am writing to express my extreme concern and opposition to HSB 542. I was a former public school teacher in Iowa. I was a general education teacher as well as an early childhood special education teacher. As a teacher, I used AEA resources beyond the supports they provided for my special education students. Supports that will be eliminated under the proposed bill. Just a few things I used as a teacher: I had a monthly rotation of books that were delivered through AEA to my classroom. I used the professional development services beyond the mandatory trainings. I took classes that were outside of my scope of expertise. I was able to learn things that made me a better teacher that I was not taught in my undergrad or grad classes, such

as classes on social emotional development and classes on speech and language. I took classes to better help my students in the areas of early math and early literacy. The things I learned helped ALL of my students. There are families that I worked with that relied on those free early intervention services (birth age 3) through Early ACCESS before they joined my classroom. I used the printing services AEA provided to print large scale, poster sized instructional materials for my classroom. All of the services AEA provides is so fundamental to teachers, students, schools, and families in Iowa. Cutting these services will be a huge disservice to the state of Iowa. As a current public school parent and a former teacher, I strongly encourage you to oppose HSB 542. We cannot afford to take away these supports from our teachers and our communities.

Name: Trisha Payne

Comment: I am writing in opposition of this bill. As an employee for the AEA and a parent of children that attend a rural school, the AEA provides a critical service to families, children, teachers, and schools. We serve the "whole child" in all areas and stage of life, this includes birth to age 21. As a parent, I know of the level of training and professional development the AEA provides my home district. Again, this would crush our rural schools and the level of support would greatly decline.

Name: Allison Ruth

Comment: To whom it may concern: Please reconsider the cuts and structural changes to the AEA that House Study Bill 542 presents. As a sister, I watched the AEA provide speech therapy to my brother. As a friend, I watched the AEA provide early access support and further therapies for a family's autistic son. As a teacher, I have collaborated with the AEA to provide several services to my students, including but not limited to: speech, occupational, and counseling. Within my district, I am beyond grateful to work with an amazing, educated, compassionate group of people who have dedicated their lives to working with students who need that extra support. Further, some of my best friends are AEA employees and watching the work they do is incredible. I will forever be grateful to the AEA for the life changing work that they have provided on a personal and professional level. I sincerely hope that this bill be reconsidered due to the negative impact it will have on thousands of children across Iowa.

Name: Susie Green

Comment: Any Iowa citizen who came up through a public school system or accredited private school is a product of AEA services. ANY Iowan who attended school beginning in the early 1970s that's over 50 years! received services including curriculum for their classrooms, professional learning for their teachers, filmstrips and movies (and now digital resources) to support curriculum, equipment and supplies to support learning, hearing tests, vision tests, enrichment opportunities for students, technology for their classrooms, Powerschool to help schedule and grade, transition services, IEP support, print materials for classrooms, home visits, crisis management teams for schools, CONSTANT planning and CONSTANT care about districts and student learning. The AEA system is planful, efficient and offers tremendous costsavings to the state. Before making any decisions to cut our AEAs, I encourage the members of the Education Subcommittee and all interested legislators to visit all nine AEAs to learn their full value and function. This is a cut; this is a bill our state cannot afford. If we do not invest in our future while they are young, we don't invest at all. And that is unacceptable.

Name: Anna Gilliam

Comment: The life of a parent can be challenging enough without the government taking away already scarce resources to help our children succeed academically and socially.

Name: Samantha Crawford

Comment: To whom it may concern, I would like to express my concerns and opposition with

House Study Bill 542. As a teacher of Diagonal Community School District, I use the AEA resources constantly for general education such as computer science resources with the Hummingbird kits and the piper computers, the math conferences and the mandatory training for the teachers that become free for the schools. The AEA Staff and all departments are Heroes and we need to keep them around. With getting rid of their resources for general education, it would become a detriment to not only diagonal but all schools. Iowa needs ALL parts of the AEA. Without the AEA, the state will see how negatively it will affect not just students, but teachers and schools too. The AEA helps with so much and removing parts of it might be the dumbest decision anyone can make. Maybe actually talking to the schools, students, teachers, administration, and parent of Iowa to see what we truly need and don't would be more beneficial than trying to cut one of the major lifelines to public schools. Your job is not to hurt schools more. Your job is to help schools survive and thrive.

Name: Kimberly Adams

Comment: I, along with many other educators in Iowa are asking you to please VOTE AGAINST this bill. The idea that AEAs will no longer be able to provide the services that keep our districts and small rural schools running is devastating. The AEA provides massive amounts of support and resources for ALL kids. Without the assistance and resources of the AEAs there will be no equity among students and it will be detrimental to Iowa education. The AEA bridges the gaps between small rural schools and bigger urban schools. The resources that are given to schools in the rural areas of our state help provide equity and high level education opportunities all throughout the state of Iowa. If the bill is passed this type of support will be unable to be there for those schools due to lack of money to hire outside supporters. During my years as a classroom teacher I had the opportunity to utilize many resources from the AEA: consulting and devices for my newly diagnosed deaf student, IEP supports and accommodations, literacy support and consulting, speech and language pathology support, online resources, books for checkout, science kits, devices, laminating, professional learning and development opportunities, and so much more. We are asking, please take time to thoroughly consider the effects this will have on Iowa education and vote no.

Name: Dominic Giegerich

Comment: There should be limited consideration of this bill, which was written by a group with no formal affiliation with the Iowa Legislature, which has no knowledge from most anyone outside of the Governor's circle. This bill will destroy public education (take the time to find out if I'm over reacting, because I am not). I have almost thirty years in as a science teacher, and principal. I work hand in hand with AEA people everyday who have worked hard to put systems in place that operate at 80-90% fidelity to their goals and purpose. The state of the state speech can be torn apart by numerous bipartisan entities that illustrate the claims and reasoning given by Kim Reynolds are either not relevant (at best) or not factual. I've implored the house and senate representatives of my district to spend a year in the schools they serve, in the AEA agencies and what they are doing. They are transparent (always have been) and operate with more accountability than most government programs. Lastly, it is a system of professionals that if it goes anything like it's proposed will send thousands of hard working professionals in Iowa in search of a job, limited those opportunities for future teachers, administrators who want to live and raise a family in Iowa. The DE jobs are NOT as lucrative EVEN if they pay 25-50% more. The culture at the AEAs are strong. Please keep Iowa's education (Public and Private) strong by leaving this bill out of consideration.

Name: Talen Birchmier

Comment: I am strongly opposed to HSB 542. The AEA provides invaluable resources to families and schools all across the state of Iowa. Schools would not function as smoothly without the AEA resources and staff members. I am in support of raising

teacher pay, however. There needs to be a way to do this without changing resources for the AEA.

Name: Samantha Rasmussen

Comment: Dear State Leaders, I am writing in strong opposition to HSB 542. I have found it difficult to find the necessary words to say in this situation; because there are so many words that need to be said. To put it simply, Iowa needs AEAs; families need AEAs; teachers need AEAs; and most importantly, children need AEAs. As a special education teacher, the words are; we cannot do our jobs without the AEA. We have special education consultants and school psychologists that administer assessments so we can determine the appropriate services and supports for special education students. Once those services and supports are established, they are there to support us in analyzing data and making ongoing instructional decisions. As a behavior interventionist, I need you to know that the AEA provides therapeutic schools with certified teachers and therapists. We have students who are not ready for the general education setting. They need services that address their mental health while maintaining their academic instruction so they don't fall further behind. As an early childhood educator, you need to know that without early access services, children with disabilities (physical, academic, or health related) do not receive the same access to education as children without disabilities. If we no longer have early access services, children who need services prior to starting school will suffer. Once they are able to start school, there is still a process that is required before we can move to determining special education eligibility. We cannot wait until children are four, five, or six years old before services begin. Early access not only provides services to children starting at birth, they also educate and support families. As a classroom teacher, I want to tell you that we cannot do our jobs effectively without the AEA. We have math and literacy consultants to guide and support us as we provide quality instruction to all students. We have technology consultants to support us in the everchanging digital world. The AEA provides professional development and multiple trainings. This learning supports teachers with social, emotional, and behavioral support in the classroom. This learning provides paraprofessionals with the information they need to best support students. This learning certifies substitute teachers. As a rural school employee, I need you to know that we cannot afford to hire all of these positions independently. I know Governor Reynolds says that moving money from the AEAs to school districts will allow for increased teacher salaries. I'm here to say that is not true. Districts cannot afford to outsource these services and pay teachers more. With services not starting until kindergarten or first grade, students are going to need more specially designed instruction, more paraprofessional services, more assistive technology supports, more accommodations, more of everything. All of that will cost money; whether it be in the form of hiring more teachers and paras or paying for more services or materials. As a school employee in a district that suffered three deaths last school year, the words are: we need the AEA and their crisis response team. When faced with a loss, support is essential. When faced with three losses in one school year, it's crucial. However, as a school staff, we are just as impacted as our students by those losses. We needed emotional support in order to be there for our students. The AEA crisis response team was there for students, staff, and administrators. We cannot control what happens in life, but it is comforting knowing that there are trained professionals to step in during those moments. As a teacher and parent in today's world, we all need the AEA crisis response team more than ever because you never know when the next tragedy will happen. Changes aren't being made to address the mental health crisis our country is faced with. Changes aren't being made to address gun violence. Changes aren't being made to prevent these tragedies from occurring. If we are actively choosing to not prevent them, then we need to be ready to respond to them. The AEA crisis response teams are the frontline in reaction to these mindless tragedies that continue to occur. As a parent, I want you to know that my child needed the AEA, well before he even stepped foot in a school. Right around his first birthday, he started having seizures. There are many children who have febrile seizures up through the age of

six. These seizures come with a sudden change of body temperature and are typically short in duration, lasting one to three minutes. Unfortunately for us, Noah experienced two extremely long seizures; one lasted thirteen minutes and the other fifteen minutes. His first three seizures, including those two, all occurred within a months time. As we were trying to figure out this new hurdle in life, we discovered that Noah lost all of his words. We went through three months of screaming being his only form of verbal communication. We had neurology appointments and sleepdeprived EEGs. We met with the ENT and had more testing done. After many appointments and no answers, we were advised to contact our local AEA for early access services. A service coordinator came to our house, on our schedule to evaluate him. She brought an Occupational Therapist with her in case the change in his verbal communication was related to an oral concern that could impact his feeding ability. After the initial evaluation, his goals and services were determined. It was uplifting to know that we weren't going through this process alone. Through it all, Noah continued having seizures; but he made so much growth. He was able to meet the goals set in his IFSP (Individualized Family Service Plan what is in place for children birth to age three). I am forever grateful for the AEA and their services that we could access at that moment. Plain and simple, Iowa needs AEAs. Every child deserves the best start to life; all AEA services are necessary to make that happen. Make the right choice for Iowa and its future generations. Respectfully, Samantha Rasmussen

Name: Tim Hood

Comment: This letter asks you to support the rural Iowa communities who elected you by shutting down House Study Bill 542, which would cut and effectively shut down Iowas Area Education Agency system. Please understand that the proposed bill would severely hurt rural schools ability to help your students be successful. AEAs are a vital resource to small and rural school districts, including those for whom I am superintendent: Sidney, South Page and East Mills Community School Districts. Why are AEAs vital to my schools and all schools in Iowa? Here are just a few important reasons: AEA Crisis Team. Last year during a period of just two months, my school districts had three unexpected student and staff deaths away from school. The trauma that results from tragedies like this can keep students from learning. But the Green Hills AEA Crisis Team was literally one phone call away and was immediately in our buildings providing support and counseling. How would this be done in the future with no AEAs? I'm not sure how my districts would have gotten through these challenging times without the AEA's Crisis Team. Excellent AEA employees who provide specialized services to students, families and school staff. They have advanced degrees and work in the AEAs for the betterment of Iowa students. They live in our communities. They buy homes and pay taxes in our communities. They raise their families in our communities. If you truly are about rural Iowa, why in the world would you shut down AEAs? This study bill has helped me and my administrative teams appreciate that we use about 90% to 95% of the programs our AEA offers to us. I have no idea how in the world we, as rural schools, are going to provide those programs and services that are demanded of us by the state without having the AEAs efficiently providing a way to share services and support. I am sure property taxes in my local districts would have to go up since I would need to individually find all of these services/people if the AEAs were cut. I wonder what Farm Bureau would think of that? In closing, does the AEA system need to work on things? Maybe just like school districts and legislators do. But if there is something specific they need to improve, let's work on it together. Do not take away from rural schools the ability to be successful by shutting down our AEAs. Instead, shut down House Study Bill 542. Sincerely, Tim J Hood

Name: Missy Johnson

Comment: As the mother of 2 children, 1 having a 504, in Iowas Educational System I am opposed to HSB 542 as written. I ask that you slow this bill down until legislators and Iowans have a chance to understand what this bill really means for our children.

Name: Amy Updegraff

Comment: I am writing as a mother, educator, and very concerned citizen in regards to HSB 542. As many others have stated here in their public comments, AEA services are vital to the work we do as educators. These services are also life saving to many families who do not have the option or availability to go elsewhere to secure them. I know the rhetoric around this has been that it will give choice but I fear this is an attempt to privatize even more essential services for our children. The governor talked about children being left behind in her speech this week. The passing of a bill such as this only continues to do just that. Resources and services that are now available from a centralized location such as the AEA will be spread out and harder to find. I have three kids who have all benefited from AEA services in varying degrees. I am a teacher who has benefited from AEA services. I tell my future educators that one of the first things they should do is find out who their AEA contacts are for the building they are going to work with and make a connection. Those people are life lines for those of us really doing the actual work with kids and families. I think the sheer number of comments here alone should open the eyes of legislators to stop trying to fix something that isn't broken. Find ways to work together and improve already strong system.

Name: Lorrie Coats

Comment: Expressing opposition to this bill. Both my son and daughter needed the services of the AEA for different reasons and they could not have been as successful in school without it. This is a much needed service for students. Please do not take this away.

Name: Amy Meyer

Comment: Dear Legislator, I am opposed to HSB 542. I used speech services through the AEA for many years when I was in school and greatly benefited from these services. I have a son that will be entering the public school system in 2 years. I want him to receive the best education possible, and that can only be accomplished with the support provided by the AEA to both students and teachers. The AEA provides schools and classrooms with so many services, materials, and resources such as digital books, science kits, curriculum supports, professional learning for teachers, digital technology support, computer coding, and helping to create academically and emotionally safe classrooms for learning. Cutting all of these services and resources is not putting education and student success first. While I am in favor of raising teacher pay, I am strongly opposed to completely eliminating all services for students who do not have an IEP. Please vote no to this bill.

Name: Douglas Johnson

Comment: As an educator that serves the Talented and Gifted students in a public school, I would like to add my voice to all of those who oppose this bill. Teachers that serve all populations benefit from having the AEAs support. They are vital part of our school and their absence will impact all students moving forward. Please consider a different approach to change other than this radical change to our AEAs.

Name: DeAnn Hebert

Comment: I strongly oppose the severe changes that have been suggested in the proposed bill for the AEAS. The AEAS, are so important for helping the students in our schools. The biggest losers, if this bill should pass, are small rural schools

Name: Holly Anderson

Comment: Vote NO to Bill 524! As both an educator in Iowa and a parent of students with extra needs, the AEA is an invaluable asset to Iowa with its excellent services and supports for schools, students, and families. Iowa citizens need AEA services to help ensure that we will continue to have a bright future here in Iowa by supporting our future, the children of Iowa.

Name: Cassica Stewart

Comment: I cannot state boldly enough how much I oppose HSB 542. Ill never be able to perfectly express how important the AEAs are to the students, families and school districts in Iowa but I am willing to give it a shot to ensure HSB 542 does not pass. I have had the unique perspective of working at the AEA as a general education consultant AND I have been a principal on the receiving end of AEA services. Their support is unmatched. I have worked on teams at the AEA that have given everything to support education in Iowaand not just special education. All students are general education students first. I've had the privilege of working as a principal in early childhood and the work the AEA does in early childhood is priceless. I was also the principal at a school that was designated extended comprehensiveone of only a handful in the state. I can tell you the work that was done there would have been IMPOSSIBLE without AEA support. They give their ALL on a daily basis to provide services. I can say I have never met a more dedicated group. I also have more contacts than I can mention that spend every day serving the students of Iowa through the AEA. Students are served and staffs and families are supported in countless ways by so many. I was in the trenches with these humans who were willing to do whatever it takes ensure ALL students got the education they deserved. Pure heart, soul and expertise that is NEEDED in Iowa. I am asking this committee to do further research on the impact of Iowa AEAs on students, families and district staff. Please do not pass this bill.

Name: Anna Roorda

Comment: Please do not advance this bill. As a new preschool teacher, I really have needed help from the AEA to come in and observe my students and offer me feedback, suggestions, resources, and advice. Without them I do not know what I would do. I work at a small private school and do not have access to school wide resources like the AEA provides. I also have used their books in my classroom to supplement my classroom library since as a new teacher I had no budget to buy classroom materials. Please do not pass this bill. It would affect so many teachers and students who need the AEA so much.

Name: Clarissa Martin

Comment: To whom it may concern the help that the AEA provides to the school system and students they service is priceless. So many students would fall through the cracks with out their tireless efforts to help find better ways to educate our students with the most difficult situations.

Name: Rachel Gunderson

Comment: I am strongly opposed to Bill 542. As a public educator, I have personally benefited from the teachings of the AEA staff from LETRS, student supports for those not yet receiving special education services, media resources that me or my school district could not afford out of pocket, etc. The loss of the proposed AEA resources would negatively impact my teaching in that I would not have consultants to rely on helping me make the best educational decisions for my students. We need AEAs and the full range of services that they offer directly to teachers!

Name: Kristen Gerhardt

Comment: Please VOTE NO. We need to consider the broader implications before making changes that would undermine the well being of our education system. The AEA's play an integral role in supporting both public and private schools. Iowa AEA's provide necessary services to our rural communities. These changes will create even bigger gaps between rural students and their suburban peers. AEA services are invaluable for teachers who do not have large budgets and students who attend small schools. Preserve the services available to all children in Iowa provided by the AEA's. Teachers have great support and educational opportunities through the AEA's. They will no longer have that if this bill passes.

Name: Connie Maxson

Comment: I am opposed to Bill 542 relating to the AEA system. Instead of dismantling the system, the legislature should demand that the Department and the AEA system working TOGETHER on how to improve the system. Clearly this bill was written with NO input from the folks that do the work and in its current form it will be very detrimental to the children and families who most need the services provided. The current 9 AEAs have all sort of oversight of the system to make sure they are meeting the requirements and necessary services. Moving that oversight to the Iowa Department of Education one entity is clearly not going to provide the level of oversight you want no matter how many new people you hire. Most of the governor's current comments about the system are based on half truths and in some cases, outright misinformation. There is NO need to move this bill through as quickly as you are apparently wanting to do. Slow down, spend some time listening to the people of Iowa.

Name: Heather Gorham

Comment: I urge you to oppose HSB542 the AEA is critical resource that our children desperately need today and we continue to require in the future. Lets support our childrens education and give them the best chance to succeed by preserving the AEA.

Name: Jeremy Parrish

Comment: I am writing to strongly encourage you to vote no on the new bill that would eliminate the Area Education Agencies (AEA) in our state. This bill would be detrimental to the state of education. As an educator of the Western Dubuque Community School District, I cannot possibly count the number of times I have relied on the expert knowledge from the AEA staff. They have assisted with strategies to help special education students as well as given advice on interventions to do with general education students. Their assistance has helped keep some of the bubble kids off an Individual Education Plan (IEP). Honestly, I could go on and on of the tremendous impacts the AEA has had on both students and adults. Their impact reaches further than just when students are in school. Their assistance helps create productive members of society. They are there to help those students who some have given up on. Their compassion and dedication to the children they serve is unmatched. I have become a better educator due to the training I have received from the AEA. I am able to take what I learn at those trainings and implement them into my classroom which benefits all students. I ask that you please make sure you are fully informed of the impact this bill would have on the education system. The future of Iowas children is on the line here. The impacts the AEAs have had on students far outweighs any false negative connotations that our governor is spreading throughout the state. While I fully understand leadership means making difficult decisions, those decisions should be made for the greater good of the people. That is why I ask you to be a leader in this situation and say no to this destructive piece of legislation.

Name: Denise Volker

Comment: I'm writing to encourage you to vote NO to House Study Bill 542. While the increase to teacher's pay is a positive proposal, the proposal for major restructuring of Iowa's AEA's could be catastrophic. The AEA's provide numerous services to Iowa school districts, as has been brought to your attention through the numerous emails and correspondence that you have received from across the state. There is no way that all Iowa districts would be able to afford all of the services that the AEA's currently provide. This in turn would lead to a huge inequity of services for districts, which in turn would negatively impact students and families across the state of Iowa. I encourage you to take your time and to fully study this matter before making any rash decisions that would impact so many people. Again, vote NO to HSB 542.

Name: Emily Diehm

Comment: While I agree that we need to find ways to best support students with disabilities to lessen or close the achievement gap, I do not support HSB 542. As someone who grew up in Iowa in the 80s and 90s, I remember the many media resources that the AEAs provided. They were interesting, engaging, and made learning fun. The idea that the AEAs were created to only support students with disabilities is false. They were intended to promote higher quality education and learning for all students but especially those with disabilities. Now as an adult, I've been employed by 2 different AEAs as a speechlanguage pathologist. In my current role, I serve several rural districts that are provided with additional resources and supports because of the AEAs. It is easier for me to support students' oral and written communication skills because of the interconnectedness between our districts and AEAs. Without these schoolwide supports, and access to AEA consultants, district administrators, teachers, and specialeducation staff/related service providers will be tasked with additional duties (e.g., finding more resources, professional development, expertise). Please think carefully and thoughtfully before moving a bill forward that would disrupt so many of the AEA services and resources.

Name: Sarah Miller

Comment: I would like to express my excitement about the prospect of increased teacher pay included in HSB 542 and my OPPOSITION to the proposed dismantling of the AEA, which is also a part of HSB 542. As someone who moved to the state of Iowa as an adult, I learned very quickly how proud this state is of their educational system. Through experience as a professional and as a parent, I have come to realize that the AEAs are at the foundation of what makes Iowa schools what they are known to be. The AEAs support new teachers as they embark on their careers in this everchanging world, while also supporting existing teachers who are trying to meet the diverse needs of all learners. The AEAs provide cutting edge training to educators across the state. The AEAs provide social/emotional/behavioral supports to schools, which are crucial in this age of increasing mental health challenges. The AEAs support ALL learners, from talented and gifted, to general education, to our most vulnerable learners in special education. And, the AEAs are on the ground providing crisis emergency support when tragedy strikes, like it did on January 4th of this year in Perry, Iowa. The above examples of AEA support are all in jeopardy if this bill is passed. Please take the time to understand all that the AEAs do before you vote on this bill! Iowas children will thank you. Sarah Miller

Name: Katy Smith

Comment: As a SpeechLanguage Pathologist for GPAEA, I know firsthand how vital all AEA supports are to ALL kids (general education AND special education). I strongly support an increase in teacher pay and agree that education reform needs to take place but, let ALL stakeholders be a part of that. Please vote NO!

Name: Anne Stupar

Comment: Good afternoon. I strongly urge you to vote no to HSB 542. While I am in support of increasing teachers pay to support the great work that they do, I am strongly opposed to the proposed changes within the AEA System. The AEA provides numerous incredible and beneficial services/supports for ALL students, as well as their families, teachers and school staff. Each one of these services/supports plays an important role. There is a significant focus on inclusive practices and helping to provide teacher/staff/families the tools they need to help their students succeed. The proposed decreased services/supports would negatively impact our children's education and future. I ask you to please reconsider and think about how these proposed changes could negatively impact all students, families, teachers, and school staff.

Name: Anne Winslow

Comment: I am a licensed, veteran Iowa teacher who has worked exclusively in rural Iowa. I am opposed to HSB542 that looks to reduce the valuable services the AEAs provide

to all children, parents, teachers and school districts in Iowa. I taught gifted education in our small school district, and the AEA provided excellent training for those of us in that challenging field. I do support raising the starting salary of public school teachers and minimum salary for veteran teachers. However, paraeducator pay also needs to be considered, as they provide an invaluable service.

Name: TJ Norman

Comment: Please Decisionmaker: Slow down this decision. I served on our local School Board for over 15 years and I tried to arm myself with as much information as possible before I supported a position. I knew how a difficult decision might impact every child in our district and was ready to explain and defend my position to anyone who inquired. My question is what's the hurry? I can't believe that every unintended negative impact has been explored. For the most part I have supported Governor Reynolds in the initiatives she has set forth and battled to implement, but this is one I feel will end up hurting kids. Please, at the very least, slow down and consider what already strapped parents who depend on AEA programs will do in their absence.

Name: Julie Weisshaar

Comment: I am writing to ask Iowa House Education Subcommittee members to shut down HSB 542 by not allowing it to move on because: 1) It creates a Des Moines centered bureaucracy that would make state government bigger, 2) It is a money grab and would just attempt to recreate the AEAs who already work well, and 3) This is bad for kids and would waste Iowa taxpayer dollars. This bill creates a Des Moines centered bureaucracy. Our governor claims it would provide Iowa public school districts with local control of their special education funds. But the bill states that all of the funds will go to Des Moines. That is the exact opposite of local control. This bill is a shameful and wasteful money grab for quality services that already exist through the AEA system. \$20.1 million in oversight + \$2.1 million in professional development funding + \$3.38 million in mental health funding would go to the governor's Department of Education in Des Moines instead of the 9 AEAs who are closer to constituents and have boards of directors representing local communities determining best use of funds. This bill is bad for kids and would waste school time and taxpayer dollars. Removing \$26.6 million for education services funding and \$33.1 million for media services funding from property taxes won't save taxpayer dollars anything, as local schools will still need to levy for support and services. The AEA system needs to work on things? Maybe just like school districts and legislators do. But if there is something specific they need to improve, let's work on it together. Do not take away from Iowa's public schools the ability to be successful by shutting down our AEAs. Instead, shut down House Study Bill 542.

Name: Abbi Lowry

Comment: I am writing to strongly urge you to oppose HSB 542. I have been a school counselor for over twenty years, and know how AEAs play a crucial role in meeting the needs of general and special education students while supporting classroom teachers. Our Iowa students and teachers need these supports more than ever, and stripping this away would be detrimental in countless ways. Now, of all times, is not a time to consider scaling back supports that we desperately need to keep in place in our Iowa schools!

Name: Olivia Hall

Comment: To whom it concerns, I am strongly against this bill. When removing these AEA services you are not only taking valuable resources away from teachers but from students and their families. We need to be pushing for more interventions within schools and helping students meet the needs they have, not taking away resources. While I do agree with the need to increase teacher pay it should not only happen because we are taking resources away. If you are truly for teachers and building these children to be strong members in our society, you have to show that you value the teachers and providing them with what they need to be great teachers!

Name: Kari Dawson

Comment: I would like to express my opposition to House Study Bill 542. As a public educator and parent, I cannot imagine a system without access to all the services that the AEA provides. It is difficult for me to put into words why the AEAs are so important because it is beyond my comprehension that people think the actions in this bill are a good idea. The AEAs provide equitable, affordable, and nonbiased services to thousands across our state. I fear that the smaller, more rural districts would be negatively affected the most. Please realize that we need these services like speech therapy, continuing education classes, data collection, materials libraries and design & print services as parents and educators and they should NOT be somehow filed away and housed under the Department of Education. Please listen to the people who use these services and vote no on this bill.

Name: Thomas Lovejoy

Comment: I am unable to support this bill if it eliminates general education consultants in the AEA. The Mississippi Bend AEA has provided our school district with great support for students and consultation for teachers. If this bill passes, we would lose the support of general education consultants. Some of the support we receive from these consultants is in Math and English that work with our general education teachers. Although it may seem that students who receive special education services do not benefit from this consulting, actually they benefit greatly from it. That is because many students that qualify to receive special education services through Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) also receive core instruction from a general education teacher. These students need core instruction plus more. Our current general education consultants help our general education teachers by ensuring access to learning for all students. While consultants who specialize in special education services are needed, without the content experts in Math, ELA, Social Studies, etc., core instruction is not maximized for all students. This leads to students who qualify for special education services to never close the achievement gap because only the SDI minutes are supported by the AEA but the core instruction would not be. If we were required to hire our own outside consultants, we would not have enough money. For two of our initiatives, our Math and ELA AEA consultants currently provide 21 days of support and coaching. That does not include planning. Other outside consultants charge \$1,0003,000 per day for such coaching support. Our district would not be able to afford that if we had to hire outside of the AEA. We also receive consulting for school improvement, professional development as a district, and help with systems. This type of consulting would cost way too much for the type of coaching it takes to make changes needed for students. We also receive consulting for preschool. We are excited about some coaching opportunities with the support of the AEA but now that would probably be cut with this bill. I am not able to support this bill. Please reach out and continue to do more investigative efforts to see how this bill would affect school districts including how it would negatively affect students who receive special education services.

Name: Rochelle Mason

Comment: I ask you to please vote no on HSB542. Iowa AEAs provide necessary services for all students, teachers, and parents (not just Special Education) in the State of Iowa, and especially rural communities. The small rural schools will not survive making up the costs it will take to provide these services on their own. I am also concerned that the Governor is going against her own bill for AEAs. All 9 AEAs have passed the inspections the Governor's committee set forth. How can she dismantle what her committee says have all been doing a great job? Don't fix what isn't broke!!!

Name: Alycia Hopp

Comment: As an SLP, an educator, and a stepparent of a special education student, we certainly share a common goal of improving the education of our kids. But, the AEA does

important work for all students and we recognize that special education students are general education students first. We provide supports that, while particularly targeted to our special education students, benefit all students and help at risk students close the gaps without further taxing our districts general or special education teachers. I urge you to support your AEAs by opposing HSB 542. We can review and improve any practices and structuring within the current systems we have, together, and with more transparency and minimal unintended consequences than what this bill can promise. What we do is important to improving education as a whole in Iowa. Our students and our teachers deserve the appropriate support to make that happen. As a parent, I recognize my child's success is more than a ranking from some test that someone else picked. I look at what she can demonstrate in other ways and we problem solve together what changes we can make to her approach to help her generalize that growth and let her skills shine. We make those decisions together! We're asking you to do the same. See our AEAs worth as a whole, not one interpretation of a set of numbers that someone else picked. Let us show you what WE can do. Let us shine through our students improvement as we make our own. Thank you

Name: Diane Lamb

Comment: I want to voice my concern for HSB 542. As a grandparent of a child with special needs we had seen what the support from AEA does. I realize this Bill does not include decreased funding for special education but we all know that decreased funding to AEA will affect special education services as well. I have seen the valuable resource the AEA provides for early access, IEP support, many resources and education for the school staff. Please spend some time with the AEA, school staff (including rural schools) parents and grandparents to fully understand the negative ramifications of this Bill. The children of Iowa deserve the best education that can be provided. Please vote No to this Bill.

Name: Jacque Guy

Comment: Iowa AEA provides necessary services to so many kids, families, and schools. They are crucial to the success of all students and provide so many resources and support for all teachers. I am a 4th grade teacher and have utilized AEA for books delivered directly to my classroom, individualized professional learning, and staff professional learning. They have impacted my teaching and my students learning in a big way! Please vote no for this bill.

Name: Kim Medici Shelquist

Comment: Please slow down the process on HSB 542. This is insane that with just a weeks notice we are talking about a wholesale dismantling of a program that has helped so many students, including my son! Many of the responses I've seen from legislators over the past days indicate they have not even READ the proposed bill. Only fools tear down what they don't even understand. Let's take the time to ensure we are truly acting in the best interest of Iowa's children.

Name: Melinda Schechinger

Comment: I am in favor of keeping the AEA fully funded! It is an integral part of our communities and as a mother of a child who received early access and has had the support of the AEA for many services it would be a travesty for many people to not have their support! As a constituent I am asking you to VOTE NO on this bill!!!

Name: Nicole Hunter

Comment: I have been a special education teacher in the public school setting for the past 24 years. It has always been my mission to put students' needs first and give my students all that I've got in trying to help them be their best. When teaching students with the highest needs in the district, I almost always have a huge roster. I am only one person, and without the help of our amazing AEA staff, I would not be able to give our students all the help that they require. After being attacked by a student last

school year and having to undergo surgery due to the injuries, I would not have returned to the teaching profession, had it not been for the support of our AEA team. They stepped up for my students when I was unable and went above and beyond for my students needs. I ask you to please reconsider this bill and keep all of our AEA staff in the state of Iowa.

Name: Katie ritzman

Comment: In regards to House Study Bill 542, IOWA NEEDS AEA! Both my kids are adopted through foster care. AEA steps in right away with foster babies! One of ours was a newborn and placed with us with a days notice. With the confidentiality of foster care, I couldnt really reach out to my village for help. I dont know what I would have done without AEA. They taught me SOOOO much about milestones, how to encourage learning, what red flags to watch for. Our other child came to us with many, many special needs. AEA provided ST and OT in our home. This was so important because between ST, PT and OT appointments at ChildServe, multiple Doctors appointments and multiple visits with bio parents every week, we needed time at home to bond with our child. AEA was able to show us ways to make therapy playful! They worked with us on language development, small motor skills. They taught me that small motor skills actually need to be in place for a childs language to develop! Our children attended a private preschool and I actually moved our youngest to public preschool SOLELY for her to have access to AEA. She left preschool with every single goal met! She will start first grade, completely on par with her peers. We NEVER imagined this would happen for our tube fed, medically needed premie whose bio parents both have learning disabilities. I am so grateful and deeply indebted to AEA. Please do NOT take this away from our children, educators and parents. IOWA NEEDS AEA.

Name: Erin Vander Velde

Comment: As a resident of Sioux Center, Iowa, I am writing today in response to Governor Reynolds' proposal regarding significant changes to Iowa's Area Education Agencies. I am an AEA employee. Over the last 23 years, I have served in the roles of school social worker, school psychologist and special education strategist within the special education department of Northwest AEA and currently am a data systems coach within the educational services department. I am also a mother of four, all who attended Sioux Center Community Schools, and one of whom was on an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for special education services through high school graduation. I am concerned about the sweeping changes that the governor's legislation proposes. As an AEA employee who has worked in both the special education and educational services departments, I have witnessed that the "division" between the two is in name only. Our staff in both departments work in collaboration with one another every day to support the learners, families and schools that we serve. If a special education strategist is working with a special education teacher on a literacy goal for a student, they will often request the services of a best practice literacy coach, part of our educational services department, to assist them in finding the best instructional strategies to support that student's learning. And those strategies will not only be implemented in a special education classroom. Because ALL students are general education students first and foremost, those same strategies will need to be utilized by the general education teacher(s) and possibly supported by a paraeducator, as well. In order for our students who receive special education services to thrive and flourish, it requires the expertise of MANY who are not considered part of the special education department of our agency. In my current role within the agency, I have been highly involved in supporting schools who have received comprehensive or targeted designations through the Every Student Succeeds Act. We have an agency team who, in conjunction with the Department of Education, have engaged in the intensive support of our schools through data reviews, selfassessments and action planning. None of the members of that team fall within the special education department of our agency. I am concerned about how that important work which benefits all students, including those who receive special

education services will be carried forward if the proposed changes take place. For the last four years, I have also helped lead the professional development within Northwest AEA. We have focused on MultiTiered Systems of Support, or MTSS. This concept is defined by the Iowa Department of Education as, "a framework that uses databased decisionmaking for continuous improvement to enhance academic and socialemotionalbehavioral health outcomes for all learners, in order to prepare them for their future at every step of their educational journey." Please note that the definition focuses on ALL learners. As a result, NWAEA has engaged ALL of our staff members both in the special education and educational services departments in this professional development. It takes all of us to serve all learners. As an employee with a focus on data, I am well aware of the learning gaps that exist between students who receive special education services and those who do not. There are also learning gaps based on other criteria English learners, race, low SES. All of these gaps should be of concern to us as a state. I would fully support a deeper dive into the root causes of the learning gaps and what can be adjusted within our state educational system including the AEAs to address these gaps. However, this bill appears to be putting the cart ahead of the horse. I am asking that you please consider the bigger picture for Iowa's learners by not making these sweeping changes at this time. Instead, take the steps necessary to learn more about the issues and concerns and develop a plan accordingly. Thank you for your time and your consideration to this matter. Sincerely, Erin Vander Velde

Name: Nancy Lindgren

Comment: To whom it may concern: I would like to express my opposition to HSB542. Area Education Agencies impact many students, teachers and administrators in Iowa. AEAs provide College and Career Ready resources, virtual career labs, STEM resources, Crisis Team support and much more to all districts. These services would all go away under the current bill and there is no way that rural districts or even smaller urban districts could provide this same level of support and expertise for the same cost. This bill seems to be a personal agenda of Governor Reynolds and does not take into account what is best for Iowa students, families and educators. WE ALL LOSE if this bill is passed. I agree that everyone can do better, but this bill will set Iowa's education backwards by removing the resources with the expertise and expecting these services to be provided in a different way and probably by an out of state FOR PROFIT company. I ask that you take more time and truly understand what this bill would do to Iowa education. Please oppose HSB 542

Name: Vicki White

Comment: To whom it may concern! We have 6 grandchildren from 1st grade to 10th grade. We have had 2 of them that have benefited from the AEA services through their schooling and the others may need these services during their time in school. It would be a shame if the state were to leave these children and any others behind and not provide the services they may need. We see so many children that need these services and may not be able to afford outside help or not know where they could reach out to get help. These people doing this work are greatly needed by the communities that they serve and are very dedicated to the well being of all children in the school systems. Please consider voting no on this bill and leaving these students behind with not having resources to help them achieve what they may not be able to without the AEAs help.

Name: Nicole Skaar

Comment: I am writing in strong opposition to HSB 542. I believe the AEA portions of the bill will harm all students, including special education students. Educational Service providers (e.g., reading consultants, Challenging Behavior Team professionals, MTSS consultants, etc.) provide valuable support to ALL students. These professionals help to improve instruction and systems, which prevents the need for remedial and special education services. When special education services are limited to those students who actually have disabilities rather than students who have not

been exposed to high quality teaching for years, then special education is improved. Further, special education teachers need the experts on the Challenging Behavior Team and other teams like it to improve services for the kids with the most unique and intense disabilities. You might think that schools will be able to use their allotted funds to purchase these services, and you might be right; however, these services will be more expensive coming from the private sector IF they are even available. Rural schools are likely to suffer the most from this privatization if educational services. I think the teacher salary portions of the bill should be pulled out and written into their own bill. Having them in the same bill as the AEA portions puts teachers and AEA supporters at odds with each other unnecessarily. I am in support of a separate bill addressing EDUCATOR salaries. Increasing only teacher salaries puts teachers at odds with master's and doctoral level school personnel, such as school counselors, school social workers, and school psychologists. Finally, I would like to know more about how these higher salaries are to be maintained, if this is just one time money.

Name: Ben Layer

Comment: In many administrations, it is sad when it seems like the actions of the leadership are too often based on appealing to some base or special interest group, or merely on getting reelected, and if HSB 542 would pass through legislation, it would forever be tainted as a decision of leadership that was made at the cost of children, more specifically, the learning structure and supports of students across the state. If you're going to be an elected official/leader, it's important to remember that you were elected to serve the people, not yourself, your friends, and your own business interests. Whether you're a republican or a democrat, making impactful decisions about the educational structure for the youth of our state, should be done with the utmost competence and genuine selflessness, as possible. This bill is a 'shoot from the hip' conglomeration of destructive ideas that would dismantle student learning and support, as well as, disengage, unmotivate, and cripple educators in the most significant manner known throughout the history of Iowa education. Working as a School Psychologist for nearly 20 years within the educational system, I can truly say that I have finally found my 'pedestal' job within an Iowa AEA system. After working in other district and private entities prior to my current job with the AEA, I was able to observe what was lacking in organizational structures that negatively affected kids learning and their overall performance in life. I have been floored in my time with the AEA, how their system leaves no stone unturned in their endeavors and approaches to support EDUCATION as a whole. In order for any system to function at the most optimal performance, all of the 'little wheels' need to function well to keep the 'big wheel' on course. The AEA has embedded that overarching support into educational systems, first and foremost, in the form of competent and confident professions, but also, through trainings, coaching, evaluations, assessments, direct service, consultations, teaming... and the list goes on and on. HSB 542 indicates that the AEAs should focus their time, attention, money, and people on delivering services and support to focus on Special Education related tasks alone. This thought needs so much deeper consideration because anyone in education knows that special education students are general education students first, and while I am out in districts training and supporting ALL educators and ALL administrators and ALL paraprofessionals and ALL students... I operate from a philosophy and mindset that when ALL of the most vulnerable learners, adults and students alike, are getting what they need, that is truly when All is All. I want to also bring to light that one of the primary and most recognized Universities within the Midwest, our very own University of Iowa. Multiple colleges within the the University of Iowa are well underway with a 5.3 million dollar grant initiative to bring additional mental health professionals to the state of Iowa. Wouldn't you know who two of the primary partners are with this multimillion dollar grant.... correct, two AEA's within the eastern part of the state. HSB 542 would significantly affect the AEA's ability to continue supporting the structure of the grant that has been moving forward in such a positive manner for the state. HSB 542 would also significantly change and

negatively affect how we are recruiting the young adult learners (school psychologists, school social workers, speech pathologists, school counselors, public health) across the midwest to make their career home within the great state of Iowa. AEA's provide rich, exclusive, and comprehensive experiences for practicum students and interns. The manner in which HSB 542 would restructure the AEAs would also eliminate the excitement and exclusiveness that has come with current recruiting efforts. With each passing day I have become more saddened and sickened that this bill could even be a potential reality and navigating my current fate (as I know it) with a career I LOVE with my AEA could be wiped away by complete ignorance and selfishness. Please, for students across the great state of Iowa, remove your political glasses and look as deep into the destructiveness behind the words of HSB 542, as you would for the learning experiences for own kids or grandkids... or the jobs of your own sons or daughters. The passing of such a bill would bring more negative change to the State of Iowa than I would see recoverable in my lifetime. Thanks for your time. I urge you with every fiber in my being to vote NO to HSB 542. Thank you!

Name: Khris Vickroy

Comment: Please vote no to House Study Bill 542. Iowa used to be known for having the best education in the nation. Taking funding and jobs away from the Area Education Agencies (AEA) is another step towards hurting our childrens education. The system needs more funding and more professionals helping our kids, not less.

Name: KATHRYN FOLKERTS

Comment: I am supportive of more pay for teachers. That is long overdue. But I am greatly opposed to dismantling the AEAs. They are well equipped to work towards and ideas/ recommendations etc that might be needed. We dont need the Governor in charge of Iowas education. I have two grandchildren who benefitted greatly from their services. This is a trouble idea and needs to be rejected

Name: Emily Lampe

Comment: Please dont pass this bill without careful consideration of the impact it will have on rural schools in Iowa. Special education students will always be a general education student first before services are designed. If Iowa removes services for general education students, they will leave themselves with an exhaustive list of special education students. You see special education cannot just occur in one spot. A child needs support ALL DAY long to effectively make gains academically. Let me provide you with one more example, living near and dear to my own heart. My son, Jayden, is a 4th grader this year. When Jayden was little he was very aggressive, angry, and could not regulate his emotions. We had scheduled an appointment at Blank Childrens hospital, but due to the shortage of providers Iowa, the wait was 8 months long. So I called the Green Hills AEA. Within a matter of a week, there was a support team in my living room working to create a plan for Jayden. Following this meeting, the team met with his general education teacher and instructional strategies and activities were designed for Jayden that met his needs in the general education classroom and were written into his IEP. His teacher received support from preschool consultants in order to ensure his needs were met for the entire half day he was at school. You see unlike the fish, Jaydens team knew they would need to make sure the general education instruction was strong in order to treat the illness Jayden was coping with. This required the help of an educational services employee from the local AEA. Jayden went on to be diagnosed with Sensory Processing Disorder and later Dyslexia. Now let me share the story of his Dyslexia journey. In 2nd grade I was informed my child was struggling to read. This was not a shock to me, as I had already started working with him at home. Jayden was not able to receive special education services because he was not lower than his peers. Keep in mind he read 5 words correct in one minute. Naturally, he came home from school mad, frustrated, exhausted, crying and a very distraught kid. We had to find therapy for him to attend as he was really struggling and put a 504 in place to try and receive some

accommodations for him in the general education classroom. His teacher, with the help of her literacy consultant from GHAEA, designed a plan of instruction for Jayden to become a reader. I will happily share with you that he is now reading 120 words correct in a minute. This is all thanks to a literacy consultant, general education teacher, and title teacher putting together a research based, Science of Reading based scope and sequence to meet his individual needs and instructional strategies in the classroom. He here was able to qualify for special education. If this bill was enacted at that time, my son would have never been given the CIVIL right to read. He would become a statistic. Instead just last night, I was calling the school frantically looking for his library book he was crying for because he wanted to read it so badly. This is what the services can do for kids that Governor Reynolds wants to take away.

Name: Wyatt Barwick

Comment: I've seen first hand the good that comes from the AEAs. I and many other Iowans strongly oppose this bill that will strip AEAs bare.

Name: Patrick Judkins

Comment: I have significant concerns about the recent bill brought about by Kim Reynolds which would impact AEAs in our state. I am a parent of children who have been directly helped by AEA services, and I wanted to share my opinion and story about the importance of the services we received. My twins were born at 32 weeks and were automatic qualifiers for early intervention services due to their prematurity. We were blessed to have a wonderful teacher come right to our home over the course of their first 3 years. She monitored their development, provided us with resources in the community, and gave us tools and strategies to encourage developmentally appropriate learning activities. Because of this unique and critically important service, our children were able to be discontinued from their IFSPs when they were 3 and have been meeting grade level expectations ever since. I thank God every day these people came in to our lives.

Name: Jake Strachan

Comment: I am writing to request that you vote to support our current AEA structure, and do NOT advance any legislation related to HSB 542. As an Iowa teacher for 17 years, I see firsthand (and on a daily basis) just how much Iowa students, families, AND staff members benefit from the myriad services and resources provided by our nationallypraised AEA system. If the Governor has concerns, there are SO many other ways to address them (by listening to Iowa parents and experienced educators), without drastically depleting the AEA resources that help our schools (especially in rural areas) thrive and meet the needs of ALL students and staff. This legislation is reckless, shortsighted, and dangerously irresponsible.

Name: Staci Shipley

Comment: I have been a teacher for over 25 years. The AEA has always been a great support to me and those in my school. The resources that are available are invaluable. When I say resources, I am not only meaning the paper type, but the professionals that are there to support and guide. As a teacher, I am able to receive continuing education. This is important to keep consistent across all of Iowa. As a parent with twins that have a disability, I knew the AEA was always there to support and guide me as a parent. I was able to receiver early interventions that made a big impact. I cannot believe anyone would ever see getting rid of the AEA would ever be a good choice. Iowa needs AEA. The education system in our state will suffer without them!

Name: Judy Walrath

Comment: I respectfully request that you vote NO to HSB 542 Area Education Agency services are essential to our communities, education systems and the children they serve. Lets get Iowa back to an education system that is top notch!!!

Name: Keri Garrison

Comment: To whom it may concern I am an early learning center director and value the resources the AEA provides for my parents, children and staff. When we identify children that are not meeting their Developmental benchmarks, the AEA is who is sought out. The early access they provide is superb. They develop interventions, care plans, and additional resources that are crucial for early development. Their easy access allows for those deficiencies to be identified quickly and a plan implemented. With out their expertise and resources majority of our children in need would be placed on a 1218 month waitlist just to be seen by providers. Support AEA as their work matters.

Name: Vanessa Stuart

Comment: I am writing to express my concerns and strong opposition for HSB 542. Please read through these comments and take a look at the demographics of all of those who are opposed. Educational leaders, school administrators, current teachers, retired teachers, parents, former students, all of whom have benefited greatly from the AEA. And, these are lifechanging benefits. They all know what a devastating loss it would be for our state if we were to pass this bill. Our kids are our future. Let's put them first and vote no on this bill.

Name: Margaret Buman

Comment: I am writing to express my strong opposition to the HSB 542, currently under consideration. As a concerned Iowan and healthcare provider, I believe that this legislation will have a negative effect on children of all ages birth through high school and cause undue stress and burden on families, teachers, schools and school districts. Restructuring AEAs and cutting funding for professional resources to families and schools is the wrong approach to helping students with different abilities and supporting Iowas does not demonstrate support of Iowas education professionals. I would go so far as to say this piece of legislation is infringing on the rights of parents and children. Additionally, should it pass, it will have longrange detrimental effects on Iowas economy; when the children who are born or are in school now, enter the workforce in 5,10, or 15 years, with educational deficits or mental health issues AEAs proactively evaluate children and are able to provide the professional resources to families and schools so that children reach their full potential. It is crucial to prioritize the wellbeing and rights of the children and parents who will be directly affected by this legislation.Please vote NO for HSB 542. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Name: Thursby Barwick

Comment: I do not support this bill and know it is not in the best interest for Iowa families. AEAs provide a variety of resources to families in need and removing that access will only lead to negative consequences.

Name: Patricia Schimmel

Comment: To Whom It May Concern:Please do not pass HSB 542. I have been a physical therapist (PT) for AEA 13 and Green Hills AEA for 27 years serving rural Iowa. When I first started working for the AEA, PT services were contracted out to a nearby PT clinic and/or hospital. They consisted of a medical model pulling the student out of the classroom to a special isolated room, thereby missing critical learning opportunities. The PT worked on passive range of motion which did minimal good in supporting the student to increase their function at school, at home, in the community, and in the workforce. Once I started serving my school districts, PT care was integrated treating the entire child in all aspects of their academic day with a focus on function and integration with their peers throughout their entire academic day. As an AEA employee, I had the time and opportunity to collaborate with special education and regular education teachers, nurses, PE teachers, Administrators, Special Education Directors, and outpatient PT to provide support

helping students with special needs to become contributing members of their school, community and the state of Iowa. If HSB 542 passes, students with special needs may greatly suffer in receiving the targeted interventions supporting them to achieve their full potential and challenge them in all aspects of life. Contracted agencies providing PT, and possibly Occupational Therapy (OT) and SpeechLanguage Pathology (SLP) services will focus only on what they are paid for. They will come in, pull the student from the regular education environment, and work on a specific goal that may or may not meet that child's functional needs however, it will meet the medical model's needs and thus reimbursement, they will not have time to collaborate with school staff because they are not being paid to do this it does not advance the student's attainment of the medical goal. A contracted PT may not have the time to support the student with special needs in acquiring the specific assistive technology (AT), wheelchair, walkers, etc. the student needs to be functional at school, at home, in the community, and in the workforce because the PT's contract may not list this as a service or be included in the time of the contract. This will lead to students with special needs and their parents, especially in the rural areas, to take time off of school and work to travel to larger cities to get evaluated for this AT, pick up the AT and other services related to the AT. This is a disservice to both students and parents alike. Please listen to the needs and concerns of the citizens of Iowa. Do not dismantle the AEAs. Iowa students deserve the best education possible. I ask that you take more time to truly understand the impact of this bill from ALL aspects. Please vote NO on this bill. You will be doing all students, teachers, administrators, and parents a great service in challenging the students in Iowa to be the best they can be.

Name: Erika Mull

Comment: I believe it is in the best interest of Iowans if the entire AEA stay active and as is. The services that they provide are invaluable not only to our children (infants and up) but to the adults with continuing education opportunities, print shop, media services and all of the knowledgeable staff for specific content. I urge you to not pass this bill. Thank you.

Name: Charlene Friederich

Comment: As a retired teacher, I truly believe HSB 542 would have a very negative on my community and the students of our schools!!!! The AEA personnel are an integral part of our schools and community! They offer so many services that as a stand alone school we would not be able to provide to our students, students parents and teachers. As a teacher, I valued the training and services provided by the AEA. My own son benefited greatly by the speech services provided!! Our classroom teachers need their services to provide great education opportunities to all students of many and various needs!!!! Please, please, please, think of the great children in Iowa!!! Don't take away the AEA and their resources!!!!

Name: Alexander Hodgeman

Comment: Regarding HSB 562, I'll just say this...AEA'S in Iowa, either directly or indirectly, impact all students every day. The services and leadership AEA'S provide school districts are essential for the youth of Iowa.

Name: Jean Wulbecker

Comment: I am a Republican voter in Iowa and urge you to vote No for House Study Bill 542. I certainly endorse competitive pay for teachers but ask you to work with the longstanding structure of the AEA's to come to a well thought through and researched conclusion. I believe that the lives of Iowa students will be negatively affected by quickly dismantling the AEA's. Please consider how students in rural school districts could be negatively impacted if for instance there is enough money for Speech Therapy but not enough money for Occupational and Physical Therapy. Our granddaughter greatly benefited by receiving all three therapies delivered by

AEA in a rural Iowa community.

Name: Karen Showalter

Comment: I would like to express my opposition to HSB 542. While I am in favor of an increase in teacher pay, it cannot be on the back of cuts to AEA. I have several friends and family members who are either teachers or work directly with AEA and every single one of them are adamantly opposed to this bill. The real concern for me is how do you plan to assist kids who need additional assistance in the rural parts of the state?!?!

Name: Abby Manternach

Comment: I support AEAs in Iowa.

Name: Jessi Carver

Comment: I am writing to urge legislators to vote no to dismantling the AEAs. Voting no on the bill is vital to preserve the crucial role Iowa Area Education Agencies play in supporting students, teachers, and schools. These agencies contribute significantly to educational resources, professional development, and overall academic success. Disbanding them could jeopardize the quality of education and hinder the progress of Iowa's education system. Please find another more sustainable way to increase teacher pay without endangering the essential services of the AEA.

Name: Tyler Christian

Comment: To whom it may concern, I strongly oppose proposed House Bill 542 and would encourage this committee to further research the benefit of Iowa AEAs on Iowa student and teachers learning and development, especially with a teacher for a spouse.

Name: Sherri Bowen-Nissen

Comment: I am a retired 30 year special education teacher. I and my students used and accessed AEA services on a daily basis. This proposed bill would be detrimental to families, students, and teachers across Iowa. The services used from Early Access, hearing, Occupational Therapy, speech services, teacher training, available programming, media, etc are valuable services that must stay in place. Please support AEA's as the stand today

Name: Brooke Hilgenberg

Comment: To whom it may concern. I want to deeply express my frustration with this bill. Please vote no. I live in a small community where my two children attend a small 1A school. Without the AEA out teachers will not be able to help the children who are in need of these services like they are now. We are in a mental health crisis! Dismantling the AEA will only add to this problem. Our educators need MORE resources not less! VOTE NO!

Name: stephanie McDonald

Comment: Please say no to HSB 542. We need all areas of the AEA. All areas have an impact on Special and General Education. Our students and districts will be negatively impacted should the bill pass.

Name: Brooke Hilgenberg

Comment: To whom it may concern. I want to deeply express my frustration with this bill. Please vote no. I live in a small community where my two children attend a small 1A school. Without the AEA out teachers will not be able to help the children who are in need of these services like they are now. We are in a mental health crisis! Dismantling the AEA will only add to this problem. Our educators need MORE resources not less! VOTE NO!

Name: Charles Barwick

Comment: I am not in support of this bill. It would strip many of the services that benefitted both of my children and all children across Iowa. Please vote no on this bill.

Name: Jenny Turner

Comment: Im Jenny Turner from West Des Moines. I worked for Heartland AEA for 15 years as a speech therapist. Id like to address the claims that this bill wont affect special education services and that it provides choice to districts. The reality is that it would make services worse and would not provide any real choice for districts, especially rural districts. If a district doesnt use the AEA for speech, OT, psychologist etc. services they will have a hard time finding people to hire on their own. The AEAs currently send people to drive to multiple districts and pay a small amount of mileage to make that happen. There is a shortage of special ed support providers and few of them live in rural communities. Also, smaller districts mostly dont have enough students to hire fulltime therapists or psychologists. So the private choice those districts would have would be a tech company. I currently actually work for one of those as a consultant because I wanted to work part time and from home, so let me tell you what that would be like. Providers do service over the internet. Small districts are much harder to place and since Iowa is a small state, there are undoubtedly few providers licensed for Iowa, which means finding people will be a struggle. Then, teletherapy works for some things, although I wish I could be in the room with the kids at times, but the kids I work with are working on speech sounds and grammar. Kids with major behavioral concerns, nonverbal kids, kids who need practical help requesting things in their real school day, really need someone there with them going to lunch and recess. Psychologists need to observe in class. OTs and PTs need to do physical things with kids. There are very few or no providers that can be hired in person in rural areas without the AEA. And there is an extra cost to use private services since they have to make a profit. Rural districts especially will still need the AEAs but there wont be the security of budget there has been to keep enough employees and the special ed providers are likely to lose more specialized support they are used to for more unique cases. I had a classroom of nonverbal kids and did PD on core vocabulary and tying that to literacy. The PD provider, an AEA employee, came out to the school to observe me and help our team integrate this throughout kids days, and matched us up with other similar teachers in other districts to learn from them as well. A PD from an ed company wouldnt offer that support and would be vastly more expensive. The centralization of the system under DE control, which means governor control, is concerning as well. Based on Kim Reynolds current staff, the administration is not likely to be reduced, but will just be people who will do whatever Kim says rather than independent educators who are there for kids and not ideology. Teachers need higher starting pay, but thats the only good thing in this bill. If youre serious about teacher pay, separate it from this bill and actually study the AEAs and get real input from the people affected.

Name: Mary Grudle

Comment: The Area Education Agency plays a crucial role in supporting and enhancing the educational experience for students and educators alike. It serves as a vital resource for smaller districts, where funding is already more limited. I would like to bring to your attention some of the key benefits that the AEA provides and how a reduction in funding would adversely impact our community: Teacher Professional Development: The AEA plays a pivotal role in providing ongoing professional development opportunities for our teachers. These programs contribute to the continuous improvement of teaching methods and help educators stay abreast of the latest educational trends and best practices. Specialized Support Services: Smaller districts often lack the resources to provide specialized support services for students with diverse needs. The AEA offers crucial support in areas such as special education, language acquisition, and technology integration, ensuring that every student has equal access to quality education. While her proposal states it will not impact special

education, with the reduction of many other areas, special education will be impacted. Resource Allocation: The AEA helps in the efficient allocation of resources by coordinating services and programs across districts. This ensures that even schools with minimal funding receive essential resources, textbooks, and technology to maintain a high standard of education. Through her address, Governor Reynolds discussed the need to have a higher emphasis and support for literacy instruction. Many resources from the AEA serve to support said instruction, and reducing funding will provide a barrier for districts to obtain. Educational Initiatives: The AEA initiates and supports educational programs that enhance student learning experiences. These initiatives contribute to a wellrounded education, fostering creativity, critical thinking, and a love for learning.

Name: Laura Andersen

Comment: Hello. My name is Laura Andersen, and I am yet another parent whose children have benefitted from our local AEA. Our younger child began with birth to 3 services as an infant with low muscle tone and later a toddler with speech challenges. He thrived with the services he received and was then able to access services again as a talented and gifted youth in later elementary years. I have also recently learned that our district's implementation of the STOP threat procedure was thanks to our local AEA. Words fail me at this time because I know that I only know a tiny part of what the AEA does. Please don't take this valuable resource away from our schools. It takes a village, and AEA is an integral part of ours.

Name: Lyle Lamb

Comment: Vote no to many children and parents would be affected by loss of funds

Name: Lacy Lynch

Comment: To Whom it may concern, I'm writing with concerns about HSB 542. I strongly support the increase in teacher pay, however, I have difficulty supporting disrupting an agency that supports those teachers. As a parent, I am concerned the services that would be available to the teachers that support my children would be more difficult to obtain or even exist. As an Occupational Therapist working in Early ACCESS, I work daily with families who are in a time of need as they bring home premature twins with development concerns or navigate a new medical diagnosis. I have had access to endless literature in order to provide evidencebased interventions and provide adequate education to support children's development. Also I have access to a library of equipment that have helped children achieve adequate positioning to engage in meals and play with family supporting development and inclusion.

Name: Amanda Weldon

Comment: Please vote no for this bill. The AEA has done wonders for my child. He would not be where he is today without their support. My son has severe autism and is intellectually disabled. He has made leaps and bounds. Communicates now and is participating in the Gen. ED more and more each year.

Name: Lyle Lamb

Comment: Vote no to many children and parents would be affected by loss of funds

Name: Lyle Lamb

Comment: Vote no to many children and parents would be affected by loss of funds

Name: Dana Lukowicz

Comment: I have been an educator and/or parent in Iowa for over 20 years. I have seen all the ways the AEA not only supports kids and educators, but families and communities as well. My youngest son utilized Early ACCESS starting at 6 months old because of his lack of speech and motor development. At 2 they came to our home monthly,

worked with his private preschool and helped us find the resources to get him an ABR in Iowa City. This is where we discovered he was hard of hearing. None of this would have happened without early access. Because of the AEAs continued support, he received interpreter services starting in preschool and throughout out as his hearing continued to drop during the pandemic. If none of this was possible before 5, his language would be no where near where it is today. He is currently performing at benchmark in 2nd grade with the rest of his peers. I also current own a childcare center in Illinois. One of the reasons we have not moved to Illinois is the services and collaboration with the AEA. Finding services, someone to listen there is like finding a needle in a haystack. I have also seen the decisions school districts make when given complete control. Many IL schools choose teacher pay over much needed art and music programs. I do not trust them, as retaining teachers become more and more difficult, to make the right decisions for ALL students. The AEAs set us apart from other states and our overall scores show that. Removing services in this dramatic way will have bad short term and long term consequences that will drive education to a place we cannot return from. Please consider the pleas of so many in your state. This is not the answer.

Name: Brittany Guler

Comment: AEAs serve all students. I would not be able to do my job without them.

Name: Stephanie Chalupa

Comment: To whom it may concern, I'd like to express my strong opposition to this proposed bill. I am a speechlanguage pathologist working in two elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school. I am also a mother to twins that will soon be schoolage. This bill eliminates AEA services that are vital to my job! I rely heavily on print shop for communication boards, therapy materials, and other printing needs. I frequently utilize our media library for themed materials for my students, especially story kits that bring books to life and encourage tons of language from my students. I collaborate with instructional services often to work academics into my practice and communication into the students academia to best support student needs. Iowa needs all supports that AEAs provide. We should not be fighting for the A in FAPE. All our children deserve a free and APPROPRIATE public education. This bill would take away desperately needed supports. I am terrified for what this bill could mean for my own childrens education. Please vote NO to this bill!

Name: Jill Purcell

Comment: I am dismayed at the premature dismantling of the AEA system, with no study on effectiveness or data to suggest the AEA system needs it. A study is fine, but why dismantle the whole system with no clear need? How are you going to replicate all the services provided? It is irresponsible to discontinue these services without a clear need or a plan to replace. Who will provide occupational therapists, physical therapists, speechlanguage pathologists, teachers of the deaf/hard of hearing, and audiologists; consultants and improvement specialists in areas such as mathematics, literacy, science, English Language Learning, school improvement, technology and digital learning, autism, student behavior, assessment, special education, gifted education, or school psychologists or social workers; and providers of services such as crisis support, professionalgrade graphic design and a print shop, library and media materials, or data/assessment support? I have yet to hear a plan to ensure these services continue uninterrupted and at the same level of quality. The system is already designed to be cost effective by sharing resources to provide services no one district could provide alone. The state already has oversight through accreditation. The AEAs have elected boards and improvement plans. Just because the state can take something over does not mean it is wise to. Please listen to the voices of Iowans and maintain the system that has benefited generations of Iowa kids.

Name: Mary Janr Laughlin

Comment: This bill will further weaken our schools. My daughter benefitted from the services provided through AEA. Early Access pinpoints challenges and helps correct them before a child reaches school age. I am terrified of the consequences of this bill for rural schools stripping the desperately needed services from small communities. Please stop this bill in its tracks!

Name: Steven Anderson

Comment: Vote against this bill! Not supporting the AEA will only hurt Iowa families, and continue Iowa's decline as in education. You can't talk about record surpluses, give free money to already wealthy families that don't need it in private school vouchers, then turn around and take it from those most in need. I am sickened that any politician would think that this is what Iowans want.

Name: Lindsey Grote-Rodgers

Comment: Im here to voice my opposition to House Study Bill 542. I stand with AEA. Usually a new year brings a sense of hope and excitement for whats to come. New goals are set. Changes are made. Outcomes are recorded. 2024 is different. It feels like a storm cloud is hovering over our public schools and its about to downpour washing away hope with no regard to whats best for the students. No life jacket. No boat. Just a flood of destruction. Working in the shadows, our governor has proved she loves to showcase her power while continuously pouring her hatred all over public education. She is quoted saying Over the last year, in dozens of conversations with parents, teachers, school administrators and AEA staff Im going to stop there because her dozens of conversations should have been hundreds of conversations. But destructive storms dont work that way. They creep in, do their damage, then look back proudly smiling leaving citizens to pick up the pieces. Dont let this happen. Our children depend on you to do whats right. Stop the storm.

Name: Nancy Baker Curtis

Comment: I have interacted with the AEA in a variety of different roles. My first encounter with the AEA was as a child. In kindergarten I fell, knocking both my front teeth out before they were ready. This resulted in years without any front teeth. As a consequence I struggled to correctly pronounce words with diphthongs such as "sh, ch, and th." With the help of a speech and language pathologist I was able to receive speech services which helped me to correct my pronunciation making me more intelligible to my peers and adults. This service would not have been possible if it weren't for the AEA as the school I attended was incredibly small with approximately 100 students K12. The flowthrough funding Central Dallas Community Schools received as a result of their partnership with the AEA was critical in helping me to overcome my speech impediment. As a teacher I use the AEA in a variety of ways. From professional development around social emotional and behavioral mental health supports and training to digital resources to integrate into the Spanish language classroom, the AEA has been a professional lifeline to me. Every school year I complete essential trainings and professional development through the AEA. This professional development and educational supports and materials were made available to me at little to no cost. As a member of a local school board I have learned about the critical role the AEA has played in improving the quality of teaching and learning for our staff members. I have witnessed large numbers of teachers and associates receive training on deescalation strategies from AEA providers. The cost of providing this same training would be astronomical for the school district. It was done at no cost to the district because of the flowthrough funding model. These deescalation strategies are used on a daily basis by teachers and support staff. They help to ensure the success of all students in the school system. Finally, I have seen my own disabled child grow and thrive as a result of the services he receives from the AEA. Charlie receives physical, occupation and speech therapy from the AEA. He has a behavior goal that was developed in concert with his AEA psychologist. He has benefitted from vision and assistive technology evaluations. All of these services have helped Charlie to make tremendous gains in

his behavior and academic goals. Most recently, Charlie underwent an evaluation to begin a trial for an Augmentative and Assisted Communication (AAC) device. The AEA assistive technology coordinator and our AEA speechlanguage pathologist worked collaboratively with general and special education teachers to select a device for this trial that would build off his current system of communication. Additionally, they have coordinated with our private therapists at ChildServe regarding the data collection and insurance process. This is a massive endeavour that will take around 69 months to submit through insurance with hopes of approval. The AEA has played a critical role in this entire process. As elected legislators I ask that you vote NO on HSB 542!

Name: Leslie Dickinson

Comment: I am writing as a parent and Iowa tax payer to state my concern and strong opposition to House Study Bill 542. This bill will do grave damage to all Iowa students and their educators. We will be leaving them with less resources than ever before not to mention the large struggle that rural schools will have. I am a parent of three children; highschool, junior high, and middle school and they all are (and have been) supported through various AEA offerings at their school. Dismantling the AEAs will cause so much harm to our schools. The mounting concerns that will rise out of this cannot even be put into words as it grows daily. Please come together and support Iowa's kids and their education by standing with our AEAs as they are, full and flourishing, and work together to do the best that can be done for all kids. AEAs are not "just" special education. This will harm our kids from all stages and ages of their lives.

Name: Amanda Freese

Comment: To whom it may concern: As a parent of a child who benefits from AEA services and a teacher who has depended upon the work of professionals I appreciate the increase in pay proposed in this bill and vehemently oppose reducing or restructuring the way our AEAs operate or the services that will be provided. Every student and teacher in the state of Iowa will be negatively impacted by reducing services to only those for special education. Best practices show that universal design allows education accessibility to all students. Consultants with the AEA make it possible for classroom teachers to design instruction and spaces that accommodate the learning of all students. The consultants in the area of technology support us in meeting the increasing need for computer science as mandated with new computer science standards. We have relied upon the Family Educator Partner program to help advocate for our son to receive the accommodations and services needed in school district meetings. This is likely one reason Iowa ranks in the lowest dissatisfaction rates with special education services. Slow down and look at why this legislation is being proposed. The families and educators of Iowa have repeatedly approved of the quality of services and resources provided by our AEAs. Don't fix what isn't broken.

Name: Shelli Blazic

Comment: Please vote no to House Study Bill 542. The AEAs across Iowa have been an integral part of my life since 1978, when I received speech services until 1981. As an exceptional learner I also receive Talented and Gifted (TAG) services. Without these supports I would not likely have the confidence of presenting to thousands of educators each year through my AEA. Not only did I move from a consumer to a prosumer of AEA services, I also have a child who has received multiple supports from the AEA including: TAG, hearing Itinerant, audiology, social emotional, and extended academic learning. She is currently a senior transitioning to college and moving forward on a successful path, thanks in large part to the AEA. Please don't let her success story be one of the last and support ALL parts of the AEA remaining in place. I'm well aware that there are structural changes to be considered, but dismantling an entire system in under 6 months is not, in my humble opinion, the way to do so. Thank you for your consideration, Shelli Blazic, LISW & Parent

Name: Amanda Weldon

Comment: Please vote no for this bill. The AEA has done wonders for my child. He would not be where he is today without their support. My son has severe autism and is intellectually disabled. He has made leaps and bounds. Communicates now and is participating in the Gen. ED more and more each year. I am all for teacher getting more pay though

Name: Tammy Davis

Comment: HSB 542 includes concerning cuts to the AEA educational support and should not be approved. An increase in teacher pay is needed in Iowa. However, the deficit that will be felt by cutting the AEA support will be great and felt statewide. I am opposed to the actions toward the AEA, proposed in this bill. Please collaborate with AEA members to create a solution that benefits all stakeholders.

Name: Benjamin Schloss

Comment: Vote no. The AEA provides services and at least some accountability to the schools.

Name: Matt Henning

Comment: I fully support higher wages for teachers. I definitely do not support dismantling the AEA. The work they do is incredibly important to the students and teachers in the state. If AEAs were suddenly gone, there would be a massive, immediate negative impact. Please do not advance this bill.

Name: Hailey Cole

Comment: I oppose the section of this bill that affects AEA's. Removing this vital resource will only hinder Iowa's students, teachers, and parents by removing the incredible support and services AEA's provide. If we want Iowa to be a great state, we need great people and minds that are ultimately forged in our education system. By cutting resources that are fueling the minds of the nation's future leaders, we risk the upward trajectory of our youth and future.

Name: Laura Calhoon

Comment: I oppose HSB 542. As a Kindergarten teacher, I rely on staff and services from the AEA to provide many services that directly impact me as well as my students. As a parent, I know that my own children will be directly impacted if funds are reduced for the AEA. Please keep the best interest of students, teachers, and families in the state of Iowa in mind by choosing to continue to fund all services that are currently provided by the AEA and voting no to HSB 542.

Name: Jay Jensen

Comment: As a parent of school aged children, a taxpayer, and a member of the community. I strongly oppose House Study Bill 542. It is harmful and detrimental to schools and children in Iowa. The AEAs (Area Education Agencies) throughout the state provide valuable services to schools that is very beneficial to the students. Cutting funding and limiting these services will leave some schools unable to afford the services at all. The AEA responded to the recent school shooting in Perry Iowa with aid to help the staff and children recover from the violence. Unfortunately, these tragedies are becoming more common. It is imperative that we have the help and services that the AEA provides to help recover. This is just one recent example of the numerous services that the AEA provides and will no longer be able to if this Bill passes.

Name: Ron Lorenz

Comment: I would like to express my strong opposition to proposed measures that would further dismantle Area Education Agencies. Such action would have a significant impact on public schools, particularly in rural areas. Those how proposed these measures must not understand that AEA's were founded to promote equity. Without

AEA support, most rural schools would be unable to meet the statutory requirements surrounding the provision of special education and related services, let alone the school improvement initiatives, professional development, and media services we have come to rely on. The prospect of district's using AEA flowthrough funds to purchase or provide alternate supports is laughable insofar as very few could hire specialty positions like occupational therapists, physical therapists, audiologists, school psychologists, etc. Even if we could, we don't have the capacity to supervise or support their work. It wasn't that long ago that the Department of Education effectively dismantled its Division of Special Education, so I am not sure why they want to try to rebuild this. Please don't allow this boondoggle to proceed.

Name: Susan Losey

Comment: I am writing to oppose the bill concerning the gutting of the AEA Agency. Not only as an employee but as a parent of a child with learning disorders. We will lose so much support. PT,OT,Speech therapy. We depend on these people every day! And the supports they provide for us are unbelievable. This would be devastating to our special population the most. Please, we need AEA!

Name: Allison Jensen

Comment: As a parent of school aged children, a taxpayer, and a member of the community. I strongly oppose House Study Bill 542. It is harmful and detrimental to schools and children in Iowa. The AEAs (Area Education Agencies) throughout the state provide valuable services to schools that is very beneficial to the students. Cutting funding and limiting these services will leave some schools unable to afford the services at all. The AEA responded to the recent school shooting in Perry Iowa with aid to help the staff and children recover from the violence. Unfortunately, these tragedies are becoming more common. It is imperative that we have the help and services that the AEA provides to help recover. This is just one recent example of the numerous services that the AEA provides and will no longer be able to if this Bill passes.

Name: Terry Miller

Comment: To Whom It May concern, I urge you to oppose to HSB 542. I am the parent of a Special Needs young adult whose life, education ,mental and physical well being was greatly impacted by all the services provided by our AEA. Hes legally blind as well as physically and mentally handicapped. As a 2 year old he started receiving services from Grantwood AEA physical therapy, speech therapy, occupational therapy,numerous interventions and hands on learning with various tools and guidances for his visual handicapp, years of educational interventions and interactions giving him and his teachers the materials and tools to help him become a productive young adult. We always had the support of a Social worker who was there to guide us in the right direction regarding our sons development and well being. Without the AEA our teachers would just have more and more piled on there plates to the point where they will be so over whelmed and have no where to turn for support. OOur educational system is already cut to the quick and this bill will totally leave it in a very dire and broken situation. I beg you and encourage you to really focus on the many students, teachers , parents and educators that benefit from all our AEA provides and how taking one more big support and help to our educational system will be such a grave unnecessary mistake and affect so many lives. Even right now our AEAs is providing grief counseling for the educational community in Perry Iowa after that terrible tragedy. Thank you for voting no to HSB 542. fo

Name: Michelle Grabosch

Comment: House Education Committee Representatives, I ask that you please read through HSB542 carefully and consider voting NO. This bill, as written, would negatively impact all students in both public and private schools in Iowa as well as educators. While I fully support Governor Reynolds push to increase teacher salaries and her voiced desire to help students needing special education, I feel as a parent with kids

in the public school system in Iowa that it is my duty to ensure that changes made to help some students does not negatively impact others. Iowa's AEAs are some of the best in the country and offer so many services that impact all students, educators, and the State as a whole. Many programs offered would not be financially feasible to some smaller school districts if the AEA system was slashed as this bill suggests. Many training materials, technology, and crisis services are benefitting all kids in Iowa. If some are underperforming as Governor Reynolds suggests, consider working with those specific AEAs to improve their services so all kids can continue to benefit from the programs provided. Thank you for taking the time to consider the risks of this bill. Michelle

Name: Sandy Breazeale

Comment: To whom it may concern, please reconsider your stand on AEAs. As a retired elementary teacher, I would not have been able to do my job successfully without the support of AEA and their staff. My students were greatly affected by all the support areas. Also, in guiding me in ways to help exceptional children who dealt with hearing loss, visual issues, and physical and mental issues. These educators not only help the students and their families, but also help educate teachers when a student's difficulties are beyond our current knowledge. Please reconsider this bill with keeping in mind all the Iowans who they have and will help.

Name: Brianne Hanson

Comment: I would like to express my opposition and concern with House Study Bill 542. As an Iowa educator, I have utilized AEA services every academic year. The media resources provide experiences and hands on ways for students to engage with the content in editing and applicable ways. Teachers in my district often use the AEA media services for novel study groups, thematic instruction, work stations, and multimedia presentations. To pass this bill would be a disservice to all Iowa students and educators.

Name: Jennifer Beck

Comment: Ladies and Gentlemen, I rely on Green Hills AEA for classroom materials, professional development, and mentoring in my 712 public science classroom. The Open SciEd curriculum strongly suggested by the state requires pages of materials for each unit, materials that I can borrow from my local AEA. If my school had to purchase these kits for my junior high classes, I would have nothing left in my budget for my high school classes. Small schools don't have the budget to provide all the materials necessary to provide the high quality education all students deserve. The AEAs help fill the materials gap and keep us solvent. When I moved from teaching mathematics to science, Green Hills AEA provided me with invaluable professional development to make my transition smoother and my teaching better for my students. Without Kim Wise, the GHAEA science consultant, I would probably have quit teaching science within the first year or two. She regularly set up professional development/training sessions for science teachers from all of Green Hills and would come into our classrooms to observe and assist us as needed. Our district instructional coach was good, but she was from an elementary background and did not know the Open SciEd curriculum. The AEA consultants are invaluable to the teachers in small schools where we might be the only ones in our districts who teach secondary science classes. They know our content and the pedagogy necessary to make sure every student gets the best education possible. Yes our AEAs provide outstanding special education services, but they are so much more than that: without them, small schools and the students we serve will suffer. Please don't let Iowa lose its reputation for high quality, equitable education.

Name: Molly Zywiec

Comment: Please vote "no" on House Study Bill 542! As a teacher, I depend on our AEA for required recertification courses, continuing education to improve my teaching, Special Education guidance, technology assistance, instructional materials that my

school cannot afford, and much more. The AEA provides vital support for schools in Iowa.

Name: Mandy Arkfeld

Comment: I am writing to express my opposition and concern with House Study Bill 542. As a constituent, parent, and school psychologist, I cannot support a bill that will limit the services that AEA can provide to schools. I have seen the benefits of school and AEA partnerships first hand, and I am confident that Iowa's smaller school districts will not be able to replicate the services currently in place with the AEA system under this proposed bill. Without the current AEA structure, inequities between districts and service delivery will develop and all Iowans will ultimately feel this loss in the future prosperity of our current students later in life. Please consider the sweeping ramifications and consequences of this bill before aligning any support towards it. Please talk to parents, students, teachers, and AEA staff to hear the real details about satisfaction with the current AEA structure. Iowa's families, students, and teachers need AEAs!

Name: Dr. Brenton Hoelsing

Comment: Committee members, I would strongly encourage you to rework HSB 542 to try to find a winwin. Providing teachers additional pay is something that is a longtime coming. Finding ways to restructure AEAs to provide districts more flexibility with their flowthrough funds, taking a look at AEA nondirect supports, etc... are all ways that could improve the services provided to staff and students. As a Superintendent of schools, both in a small district and larger district, I honestly cannot find a way to provide the current nonspecial education services that the AEA provides to our districts, especially the smaller district I spent 13 years at. Please find a way to rework the bill and find a way to ensure that if AEAs have to go away, that the districts keep ALL flowthrough funding to allow us to support ALL students, as we have for 50 years with the AEAs. If you want information on what we provide at Lewis Central for nonspecial education services, and what will go away for students, staff, and parents for support, please contact me.

Name: Jim Gorman

Comment: I strongly urge that you NOT support HSB 542 in its present form. The idea of dismantling an educational support system that has served Iowans for almost 50 years in roughly 90 days, shows an extreme lack of good judgement and visionary leadership on the part of our elected leaders. Include educators in the study process and do it well. Dont just follow the republican playbook of casting doubt on all institutions in the misguided notion that doing so will make things better again.

Name: Erin Suntken

Comment: As a parent, as an aunt of a nephew who utilized AEA services, as a school board member, I strongly oppose HSB542. There are far too many students who utilize the programs that the AEA offers as well as staff within the school systems, who would not be able to do their best in providing for their students, without access to AEA personnel. These are vital programs that schools would 1. Not be able to afford on their own, and 2. There would not be resources in rural Iowa schools to fill these positions. Please, please vote against this bill. I am all for teacher wages being raised but this should not be included in the AEA bill and should be separate bc they have nothing to do with the other. Thank you. Erin

Name: Kelly Schloss

Comment: Addition to my former comments: As a former Director of Learning Supports in Perry, IA, (special education and title programs), please consider the IAC 281:41 as you review this proposal. Consider all of the components within Special Education law, and how AEAs all services currently provided help ensure students with disabilities needs are met.

Name: Lisa Marter

Comment: to whom it may concern. I along with many citizens of Iowa are against this bill.. My son has received early access services, since he was two weeks old and has benefited from them every single day of the school year and he is now 9 years old. We are in a smaller rule community, and our district thrives off of the AEA. I am all favor of advancing teachers pay/salary, but I am having little understanding of the benefits of these legislative changes?

Name: Angela Hance

Comment: I'd like to speak out on my opposition to this bill, which I believe to be a comprehensive dismantling of the AEA system as we know it. I've worked in education in Iowa for 35 years now, and know the ins and outs of what a teacher, principal, superintendent, student and family is able to receive from the AEA system. Schools rank media services as an important service to schools. From Van mail, which delivers resources and inter agency mail 2x a month to a forming a consortium to secure multiple digital learning platforms for students to use in their daily work. We also rely on media and technology to purchase book sets, audio books, videos, and resources for teachers to use in their classroom and to understand how to use technology in the classroom. There is no way for schools to really be able to offer these services to our teachers and students without the AEA. The AEA offers professional development in literacy, math, science, social studies, behavior, restorative practices, positive behavior supports, and many more. We follow up with onsite support, modeling, walk throughs, and work with principals to help support fidelity of implementation. They also offer consulting support for English Learners and Talented and Gifted. These teachers truly need and value the support of these consultants as they are often the only person in their district that knows anything about the law and how to support these unique learners. Early Childhood consultants provide professional development to ALL preschool teachers and their paraeducators many times offering various options depending on the needs and longevity of the individual teachers. They also work very closely with the DE on something called preschool specially designed instruction which supports preschool teachers to implement strategies for students with disabilities. They meet with the teachers, help them action plan, model strategies, and sometimes help create resources. They meet with preschool teams and parents when a child is struggling to help develop interventions, and then meet regularly to review progress data to determine if the child is successful or needs to move on to a special education evaluation. It also sounds as though the bill wants to eliminate a lot of special education expertise in terms of evaluating students for special education. The state has a good system of identification and we keep identification rates lower. If each district is given the option to do so, where is the oversight? Districts could literally identify any child they want as needing an IEP and get weighted funding for their bottom line. And what if a district keeps the flow through dollars and hires one SLP for 200 students with speech IEPs? How is that fair to the student with a speech and language disorder. AEAs won't be able to hire specialized staff either they are going to run move to other states where their services are appreciated by their Governor and legislator. Again, I implore you to say NO to this bill in favor of a comprehensive study of AEAs that can take place over the course of the next year. To dismantle AEAs in the next 5 1/2 months and expect districts to figure out how they can pick up the pieces is not possible. VOTE NO

Name: Marvin Cross

Comment: As a grandparent and uncle, it really concerns me about the cuts and changes you are discussing about this bill. My granddaughter attended a private school until 7th grade. When they finally diagnosed her with dyslexia her parents found True Potential.

Which was great but expensive. We helped pay for her time time there. When she attended Johnston and later DCG she received help through AEA during the same time everyone had "specials" in school time. As a result it was handled well and she really progressed. Another grandchild is receiving speech therapy but would no longer get it unless they drive an hour to Des Moines to find a teacher for him. Besides of the extra expenses, time out of school and parent taking off work (everyone can't get after school appointments). My understanding the money saved by this change would go back into the general budget not education budget. How is this helping anyone? Another consideration is the loss of some excellent teachers as they leave the education field and probably earn more money. BUT we are throwing away all that experience and love of their job of working with children. Aren't our children our TOP priority? Please consider all we can lose by such a drastic change. Yes, you can contact me personally if you want more of my concerns I really can't see where this change would help the children and families but it would put more money in the GENERAL FUND and that I suppose would look good! Let's keep our education great in Iowa. One of reasons we moved to Iowa in 1975 for our boys education.

Name: Marvin Cross

Comment: As a grandparent and uncle, it really concerns me about the cuts and changes you are discussing about this bill. My granddaughter attended a private school until 7th grade. When they finally diagnosed her with dyslexia her parents found True Potential. Which was great but expensive. We helped pay for her time time there. When she attended Johnston and later DCG she received help through AEA during the same time everyone had "specials" in school time. As a result it was handled well and she really progressed. Another grandchild is receiving speech therapy but would no longer get it unless they drive an hour to Des Moines to find a teacher for him. Besides of the extra expenses, time out of school and parent taking off work (everyone can't get after school appointments). My understanding the money saved by this change would go back into the general budget not education budget. How is this helping anyone? Another consideration is the loss of some excellent teachers as they leave the education field and probably earn more money. BUT we are throwing away all that experience and love of their job of working with children. Aren't our children our TOP priority? Please consider all we can lose by such a drastic change. Yes, you can contact me personally if you want more of my concerns I really can't see where this change would help the children and families but it would put more money in the GENERAL FUND and that I suppose would look good! Let's keep our education great in Iowa. One of reasons we moved to Iowa in 1975 for our boys education.

Name: Marvin Cross

Comment: As a grandparent and uncle, it really concerns me about the cuts and changes you are discussing about this bill. My granddaughter attended a private school until 7th grade. When they finally diagnosed her with dyslexia her parents found True Potential. Which was great but expensive. We helped pay for her time time there. When she attended Johnston and later DCG she received help through AEA during the same time everyone had "specials" in school time. As a result it was handled well and she really progressed. Another grandchild is receiving speech therapy but would no longer get it unless they drive an hour to Des Moines to find a teacher for him. Besides of the extra expenses, time out of school and parent taking off work (everyone can't get after school appointments). My understanding the money saved by this change would go back into the general budget not education budget. How is this helping anyone? Another consideration is the loss of some excellent teachers as they leave the education field and probably earn more money. BUT we are throwing away all that experience and love of their job of working with children. Aren't our children our TOP priority? Please consider all we can lose by such a drastic change. Yes, you can contact me personally if you want more of my concerns I really can't see where this change would help the children and families but it would put more money in the GENERAL FUND and that I suppose would look good! Let's keep our education great in Iowa. One of reasons we moved to Iowa in 1975 for our boys education.

Name: Pattie Bailey

Comment: Pattie Bailey In her Condition of the State speech earlier this month, the governor said, regarding the Area Education Agencies, Over the last year, in dozens of conversations with parents, teachers, school administrators and AEA staff, its become clear that while some of our AEAs are doing great work, others are underperforming. Just short of five decades of teaching, I gave up teaching two years ago to be a stayathomegram. When I had a student who misbehaved, I might have required that THEY miss their recess time. But I did NOT keep the whole class inside. Please vote NO on HSB542. If some AEAs are underperforming as the governor said, find ways to help them do great work like the others.

Name: Barbra Wheeler

Comment: I appreciate another forum to express my support for the AEAs and my firm knowledge that HSB542 is a damaging and regressive piece of proposed legislation. My comments will be expressed from 3 perspectives. I am a retired state employee. My career spans over 30 in the agencies of DHS and DOC. The individuals served by both agencies are served by AEAs. The core mission is to move children, individuals and families to break harmful cycles and develop new skills. The benefit to the families DHS serves is the same as it would be to any Iowa family with children with both general and special education students. DOC is making progress as it battles recidivism. Educational opportunities for Iowas incarcerated individuals with special education needs, meeting guidelines, are received in all 9 of Iowas prisons, youth shelters and juvenile homes. Education and employment training are key achievements in improving recidivism in Iowa. I also understand the need for supporting new teachers with the salary increase and I whole hearted support this increase, not, however, as proposed. This increase is what is identified as one time money. This means that teachers will receive these increases, paid for by the passage of this legislation. Next year these funds will not be received as these are one time funds. Lets say the following years budget is budget neutral (meaning no budget increase but will need to manage as they did the previous year) EXCEPT the salary increased proposed in the bill being a one time funding does not exist. The districts now have a budget cut not just a deficit . The budget is cut further by the simple obligated wage increases of all staff. Now, something will be cut. I cannot presume to know what individual districts will choose to cut but it will somehow impact teachers. Lets then consider that AEA supports no longer exist. Teachers will do even more with exceedingly less. The hands on manipulates AEA provides, media services, classroom support, coaching, tech support, math and literacy consultants, naming just a few of provided services will be gone! I would be amiss to not mention affordable CEUs both critical and mandated, once provided by AEA. Gone. This is fiscally and morally corrupt. Moving on to my experience with AEA as a parent and now grandparent. Nearly 30 years ago one of my children was identified by a wise and skilled preschool teacher as needing services from AEA. My child was staffed into Early Access and received services as a general education student once in school. Our AEA consultants worked with our child and teacher as well as the family. To be staffed out successful has made a difference for our child and so many others. Currently I have 3 grandchildren who benefit from AEA services continuing to fulfill their mission in the same manner they did nearly 30 years ago. Without AEA services many school districts will not have enough resources (fiscal or available independent private providers) to provide mandated and needed services. Lets consider how that would look. We already know the teachers have been robbed of invaluable supports, and the parents will need to purchase those services if the districts cannot afford them. Mom and Dad will need to take the child from the classroom and transport the child to the provider, make payment and transport back. Of course that is, if their location has the needed services available. Please consider the range of services we are considering. These needs have no socioeconomic home. I would venture to guess the majority of Iowa families have had a child, currently have a child or will have a child in their family that will need to utilize one of these

vast services. Finally, as a senior citizen of the state of Iowa I fully recognize that this state is losing and not retaining our workforce. We need professionals and skilled labor to be supported and be prepared to join the workforce. AEAs are that very critical piece. If we do not support our teachers and schools we will continue the trajectory we are on. I feel I must be blunt, this is smoke and mirrors and as damaging a piece of proposed legislation that I have seen. The entire inception of the bill is baffling at best. I must have faith that our elected officials see what has happened here and understand that there are so many of us that see and understand it as well. I believe it is evident we will not be quiet or passive in our resistance. Too much of doing more with less under the guise of saving money, in reality it is nothing more than a cost shift all the while blowing the smoke of misinformation. We love our democracy and this bill has prompted actions that assume it will happen as it is a done deal. HSB542 is damaging to every citizen in this state. I implore you to unanimously vote this bill down. And yes take a look at the AEAs. Consider my words about how detrimental and pervasive doing more with less has become in our state. I ask you to recall AEAs originally had 15 areas now there are 9. I understand the cost and yet what is the future of our children worth as well as the positive impact the wellbeing of the state, itself. Makes me wonder, what has been spent on this endeavor to this point. Maybe follow the money and recoupas I suspect you all feel blindsided. Respectfully

Name: Teresa Walker

Comment: To whom it may concern, I would like to state my opposition to House study bill 542 regarding the Area Education Agencies (AEAs). The AEAs offer numerous and much needed services to Iowas schools (public and private), students, and families. Those services are far ranging and go significantly beyond just special education in the schools. All students are served through AEAs from birth to extended year programs (0 to 21 years of age). They are served through all the programs offered by the AEAs from Special Education to Educational Services to Media. As I understand the bill, some, but not all special education services would remain, but both Educational Services and Media would be closed down. Those two services offer schools so much assistance through trainings, information, and materials. How will the schools be able to find, hire, and implement programs and services in reading, math, pedagogy, how to manage classroom behaviors behavior, how to write individual Education Plans, early access services for disabled newborns, and other areas of educational expertise (I have only make a few of the services available). How will school districts be able to handle the aftermath of school shootings as in Perry where the AEA provided counseling services and other supports? Where will school districts be able to get all the books and materials that are provided free through Media services? The 642 bill is destructive not only of the AEA system, but of all the services that are provided through the AEAs. It is also destructive for the school districts that depend on AEAs, the children that are the benefactors of the AEA educational supports, the parents of all children that have access to the services, trainings, and media items that are currently available through the AEA system. Who is going to provide and pay for all those services? Think this through and do not destroy a system that works as well as the AEA system . . Do destroy the services that are currently available. Your will not be able to fix damage caused to children, schools, and families that you will cause be implementing this bill!

Name: Jennifer Housman

Comment: To Whom it May Concern, It is ridiculous to think that you can limit the AEA to just providing services for Special Education. Our AEA's do so much more for schools and families in Iowa. It is hard enough for Iowa schools to find teachers, subs, para educators, bus drivers, etc and now you want them to have to hire speech pathologist, trainers, consultants, mental health supports, English as a second language learners support, etc. I feel like this bill has been rushed through without regards to what Iowans want or need. I also feel that it has been lumped in with teacher compensation so that Iowans focus on that and not the implications of losing

our supports for schools. All of this is so disturbing. It's not a great time to be an educator in Iowa and this is not helping.

Name: Anne Nemgar

Comment: Public schools have been the bedrock of our society. Instead of taking from them, we need to start supporting, investing, and trusting in them. The changes to the AEA, are not going to make things better, just more difficult, especially for those in rural communities. Why change something that has worked so well, for so many, regardless of income. I think it is vital that we support our public schools, therefore, I oppose House Study Bill 542.

Name: Catherine Gorman

Comment: Dear Legislators, I respectfully request that you vote no to HSB 542. I was involved with the AEA system for 43 years beginning shortly after the inception. I have worked in 6 AEAs (2 extras because of severe budget cuts and mergers). Like any large organization it is not perfect. But I have witnessed dedicated, hard working ,intelligent, highly trained professionals, do their very best to change what needed to be changed and provide endless hours of professional development based on research to provide the best services possible. One of the many lessons I learned was that if minimal services are provided to our young students then they, through no fault of their own, will achieve minimal progress. It is my fear that if HSB 542 is passed with out a suitable replacement being already established that's what our kids will get, minimal services (just enough to keep districts out of law suits). I implore you to thoroughly study services and rate of progress before throwing out what seems to be working. If a better program is discovered then great. But only then should our kids and families be denied services. I would also urge you to include professionals who have the expertise that is needed as well as the families that have received services as their insite is invaluable.I am especially concerned about children ages birth to 5 years as they are not yet included in all the public schools have to offer. Who will serve them if the AEAs are dissolved? These years are crucial times for learning both for children with disabilities and those who are typical learners. If we deny services and those valuable skills that are targeted our children will not be able to take full advantage of the education offered them at age 5 whether it be public or private schools offering the education. All of you were elected to protect and better lives of the Iowa citizens including our vulnerable youth. I don't care if you are Republican or Democrat this is a time to unite for the sake of those children. It is not the time for personal political agendas. Way too much is at stake. I thank you for your service to Iowa!Respectfully,Catherine Gorman

Name: Mary Holmes

Comment: I am writing to express my concerns with HSB 542. Please stop and think about the consequences of passing a bill that will hurt all students in Iowa, and ultimately degrade our educational system. My two children were both educated in the Madrid, Iowa school system, and both used the AEAs extensively. Today they have good jobs and are contributing members of their communities here in Iowa. Please vote no!

Name: Stephanie Kilker

Comment: To whom it may concern: I am a teacher I have been teaching for almost 15 years. And prior to that I worked as a para educator and a sub. I have been different school with different ages. The AEA has played a moat role in helping staff support students with special education services with as well as media resources for general education teachers. Students are already struggling with mental health and academics. The AEA staff has provide many trainings and taught me and other teachers how to help student with many learning disabilities. They are valued and taken them away will negatively impact students and their growth.

Name: Elizabeth Paez

Comment: Dear Governor Reynolds, I would like to share with you my terrifying and

overwhelming concern with House Study Bill 542. I have been teaching for seventeen years now and before that, I was a para educator for twelve years before going back to school myself. My entire career has been working in an at risk school where most children come to us with more than just educational needs. As already, our plates as teachers are always full, we are always being asked to wear multiple hats to make triumphant citizens out of our students with the resources that are given to us. The AEA is one of those wonderful resources that assist us in making these struggling students triumphant. From speech services to OT services, the AEA is a crutch WE the teachers can reach out to when our bag of tricks has run out, when we know our students NEED MORE than just us. I think we can probably count in one hand the number of districts in our state that would say, Yes, we have the funding to hire experts to service the most wonderful and pure things in this world, which are our children. Public or private schools, the number of children that need MORE are at our schools, and parents are counting on us, on our great state to give their little ones a chance and WE (the teachers) cannot do it alone. If Bill 42 passes, it would be taking away, dreams, opportunities, and self-esteem that keep our state's future (students) from being triumphant. I URGE you and PLEAD you and your committee to PLEASE PLEASE research the terrifying domino effect this Bill would create.

Name: Jean Oberbroeckling

Comment: To Whom It May Concern: I have been an instructor for College for Kids, a summer academic camp, sponsored by Grant Wood AEA for the past 30 years. The opportunity for our best and brightest students to be challenged is paramount for Iowa's future! Their learning should never be taken for granted. With the realignment of the AEAs' services, and the possibility of dropping support for gifted students, we do them a great disservice. How can Iowa grow, excel and prosper if we don't continue to keep our gifted students in Iowa? These programs foster a desire for them to "stay at home" because of the rich relationships they develop with other gifted students and the academic challenges they are given. They remember their College for Kids experience long after high school and college. I understand that meeting special education students' needs are also necessary, but at the expense of dropping gifted education services, sponsored by Grant Wood AEA, seems extremely unfair! Shouldn't we be "servicing" another type of special education...that being gifted education?

Name: Sherri Bowen-Nissen

Comment: I am a retired 30 year special education teacher. I and my students used and accessed AEA services on a daily basis. This proposed bill would be detrimental to families, students, and teachers across Iowa. The services used from Early Access, hearing, Occupational Therapy, speech services, teacher training, available programming, media, etc are valuable services that must stay in place. Please support AEA's as they stand today

Name: Dina Brake

Comment: I am a citizen of Marion/Cedar Rapids, Iowa, a former preschool teacher and supporter of AEA services. The AEA was a valuable resource during my time as a teacher, not only for myself, but for the families I worked with. Numerous trainings were made available as well as opportunities for families to get help with speech therapy, behavioral issues, vision screenings, and numerous other therapies all before they started school. When every service except special education disappears, school districts will be left figuring out how to pay for private contractors because the flow through money for these services does not return to school districts. This will be a burden on school boards and taxpayers. This will absolutely crush rural districts. My nieces will be attending school in a small district (Saint Ansgar, IA) and I worry that should they need AEA services, be it because they struggle with something or are gifted, that those services won't be available. My cousin's daughter goes to school in Glenwood, IA, a friend's son, benefited from services in Riverside, IA and Pleasantville, IA. All of these children attend school in small districts and all have

received assistance that didn't fall under Special Education. A good friend is a Special Education teacher in Carlisle, IA, she relies heavily on her local AEA to better herself and to help her students. Special Education is important, but so are all the other areas the AEA provides programs and assistance with. This bill seems to be a response to a problem that doesn't exist. The Iowa Department of Education website praises the current AEA structure. The website says: "The Iowa system is widely regarded as one of the foremost regional service systems in the country."

<https://educate.iowa.gov/about> I hope that you will give this bill due process with all constituents. As it stands, it will destroy education in ways we can't even foresee or conceive of yet. The AEAs work as educational partners with public and accredited private schools. Agency staff members, school staff, and families work together to help all children reach their highest potential. Please help keep it that way! Please vote No to HSB542. Thank you, Dina Brake

Name: Erica Taylor

Comment: I strongly oppose bill 542. The AEA has been a blessing in my community. It helps so many children and families.

Name: Dustin Kralik

Comment: Please reconsider this bill and consider the opinions of the public, your constituents. The services that AEA's provide are vital. This bill should not be forced through without full debate, full public disclosure and full consideration of all of its impacts. The teacher pay increase is important, but taking away AEA funding is just another cut to public education in a state where we used to value public education.

Name: Lauren Underwood

Comment: Hello, My name is Lauren Underwood and I am a lifelong resident of Iowa. I am writing to share my personal experience with AEA and why I believe AEA services should not be cut or defunded. My first son was born with respiratory issues that his team of pediatricians and pulmonologists could not pinpoint the cause. He looked like a healthy baby, was meeting all of his milestones, but had internal issues going on that prevented him from breathing properly, eating properly, speaking properly, and he is also immunocompromised. I could not breastfeed him because he couldn't breathe and nurse at the same time, and while bottles were a little better he still would choke on his milk. The issue persisted when transitioning to solid foods. We were referred to Blank Pediatric therapy where it was determined that most of his issues were due to a lack of muscle tone. He made progress with eating, walking, playing, etc. but we were quickly dismissed from Blank's program once he met their criteria. However, he continued to have issues and it was clear that he needed more services. It was then that we found out about AEAs Early Access program. We met with our local team and it was determined that our son still needed help. He would still choke on food, he was scared to eat, and he was behind in speech at this point. Through their services, we were given free weekly or biweekly therapy with an occupational therapist, a behavior therapist, and a speech therapist. It is because of our AEA team that our son went from having constant issues with eating, being scared to eat, and not talking, to where he is now. He is able to eat independently, try new foods without being scared, and he is talking above the criteria for an average four-year-old. Our daughter was born early at 37 weeks and she was only 5 pounds 13 ounces when we brought her home. She too had trouble with her bottles. Our AEA team jumped right in to help and because of our occupational therapist, we were given solutions that worked to help our daughter use bottles and gain weight. These were solutions that were not told to us by any doctor or healthcare provider. If I would have known about AEAs services when our son was born, I am confident that he would not have faced the issues that he faced, as that was proven with our daughter. Early intervention is key, and the services that AEA provided to our family were extraordinary. Without them, our children would still be behind, struggling, and we wouldn't have solutions or answers. I am asking you to please consider the children and the families that would be affected and impacted negatively without the

support of AEA. Please reconsider pushing this through. We need AEA! Thank you for your time. Lauren Underwood

Name: Jessica Korf

Comment: I am one of the people who can see first hand what AEA services can do for students, families and educators from multiple points of view. I am a Heartland AEA Speech Language Pathologist. I have worked with students in multiple small districts. I have had students from birth to 21 on my caseload. Students who have to master 12 sounds that they previously couldn't say. Those who can't say their own name and aren't understood by family members or teachers. Working in the classroom I can make these student goals functional. I can use classroom materials to help kids practice skills using vocabulary/spelling words/peer names/etc. A student last week gave me the most enormous hug because I understood him and for the first time in his school he could have a conversation with someone. He then performed a song and cheered when I knew the song and joined in. The week before I helped two kids say their names for the first time. Amazing moments seeing children have absolute joy because they could communicate with someone else clearly. These, and many of my students are in schools who could not afford to contract outside professionals. OR even if they could, the students would not be served in the same functional capacity. What about the students I have from birth to 3? How many students have been given a chance to be successful in the classroom because they received services at a young age and were able to close some or all of their gaps in skills. The families who have been taught skills and given confidence to work with their child in the own home. What might happen to all of them? As a parent I have seen the benefits of our AEA daily. One child is in kindergarten and uses digital resources in her classroom to access books, math programs, and educational videos. Resources that would not be offered with the proposed bill. My daughter is in gifted and talented and these programs are part of what helps her learn at her level so that she is challenged in the classroom. She has also received assistance from the AEA social workers as a child diagnosed with ADHD who struggles with impulsivity. These professionals provided personalized social stories, programming and visuals to help her close the gap in her social emotional skills so that she could learn during carpet time and academic tasks. My son has an IEP for behavior. When referred to the AEA his daycare was struggling to keep him safe in the classroom. He couldn't handle rest time due to there being no sensory input and wasn't able to gain attention appropriately. The AEA social worker came in, evaluated him and now has created programming for both his preschool and daycare. The AEA team in place works with birth to 3 and 35 year olds, meaning the team can smoothly transition students to different settings and ensure skills aren't lost as students change settings. Transition meetings are held to help ensure these students continue their forward motion and can have the most success. There is such a constant flow of communication that benefits my son. Contractors can't provide a team approach such as this, and if the AEA were chosen to continue, under the proposed bill they wouldn't have the same resources they do now to support student growth. I unfortunately also have a third point of view as someone who was in need of the emergency response team. I have seen it in action at my schools after student suicides or car accident fatalities. Then, in September 2022, my son's teacher was murdered. This wonderful woman was my son's teacher, Sunday school teacher, babysitter and we worked together (I am the Speech Language Pathologist at that daycare). I was in shock. I was heartbroken. I had no idea how to process this loss and even less of an idea on how to tell my children. The AEA sent a few social workers for staff, AEA employees and parents who felt they needed support. I went in and immediately felt comforted. These professionals let me speak when I was ready. Ask any questions and even share stories. I was able to get handouts with resources and given guidance for how to speak with my children. I felt prepared for something one should never have to do in life. I then was able to help other parents of students in the class as they too struggled. The AEA connected daycare staff with a counseling organization so they could have a day to process together and figure out how to move forward. The social workers checked back in

with me to make sure I had everything I needed and that the daycare was in the same position. This support helped our community grieve and find ways to honor Karisa. It was invaluable and if this bill goes forward with the cuts proposed? Well, it is heartbreaking to think of staff, students and families trying to navigate traumas/tragedies without these resources. I am imploring that the statements made against the AEAs be researched. That those voting on this bill take the time to consider the detrimental effect the loss of these resources and professionals will have on students across Iowa. Especially those in the rural districts where it will be nearly impossible to fill many positions. We want Iowa to be the best in education? Then we need to provide the students with the supports needed for them to be successful in school and life. Thank you for your time to read this, and for your dedication as a public servant for our state.

Name: Kari Heggen

Comment: I have not yet used AEA services as my daughter is not yet in school. However, the idea that services such as these might not be available by the time she reaches school age terrifies me. These programs are not a nice to have but a necessity

Name: Laura Kendrick

Comment: Please do not cut budget or services of the Aea. My sons, daughter, and now grandkids have been served. The aea is a necessity.

WORSHIP RESOURCES

12 December 2021

Third Sunday of Advent (Joy)

Zephaniah 3:14-20

Sing and Rejoice!

Additional Scriptures

Isaiah 12:2-6; Luke 3:7-18; Philippians 4:4-7; Doctrine and Covenants 163:9

Preparation

Review the Advent 2021 Preparation Guidelines on page 35.

Before the service, add a star above the stable at the front of the worship space. Provide five Advent candles to be lit during the Advent Readers Theater. Light the candles of Hope and Love before the service begins.

Prelude

Carols of the Season *Choose two.*

"O Come, O Come Emmanuel"

CCS 394

"Joy to the World!"

CCS 408

"What Child Is This"

CCS 432

Welcome

Advent Readers Theater
and Lighting of the Joy Candle

See script at the end of service.

Advent Prayer

O God of joy and light, Today we will rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone so that we remember that the Lord is near. Let us remember not to worry about anything, but in everything through prayer and supplication, and with thanksgiving let our requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

—Philippians 4:4-7, adapted

OR

Video: “Joy” by The Skit Guys

skitguys.com/videos/advent-worship-4

Secure the necessary permission to show and stream this video.

Advent Hymn of Joy

“Hope Is a Light” *Stanza 3*

CCS 398

Prayer for Peace

Light the Peace Candle.

Prayer

God of Joy,

Sometimes it is hard for us to remember that you created both tears of sadness and tears of joy. We see so many situations for which we empathize: families in need of food, lonely people in search of friendship, animals in search of new homes, and earth in need of rest. You are with us.

We see your hand at work in creating peace in our communities. May we join you in creating this peace. We pray for the lonely, the hungry, the homeless, and the tired. And now, please strengthen us to hug, to feed, to provide, and to care for all in need.

Fill us with your joy as we strive to share peace. May our joy overflow and bless those we serve.

In the name of your son, Jesus, the one we wait for and who gives us great joy!
Amen.

—Tiffany and Caleb Brian

A Daily Prayer for Peace is shared 365 days a year. Find additional ideas for Prayer for Peace on the church's website.

Hymn or Ministry of Music

"Not in Grand Estate"

CCS 444

OR "On Jordan's Banks the Baptist's Cry"

CCS 391

Spiritual Practice

Naming Blessings

Provide one 4x6-inch piece of white cardstock and a pencil for each person. For those viewing online be sure to give them notice to have paper and a pencil on hand. Have soft music ready to play in the background.

Awareness of all of our blessings can bring us joy. Please join us for today's spiritual practice. At this time, on the provided card, you are welcome to list or draw three of your favorite blessings. *Pause to give time to write or draw.*

Most likely you thought of more blessings than the three you listed. We are so fortunate. To continue this spiritual practice of joy throughout your week I invite you to take your card home and add an additional blessing or more each day. May you feel joy knowing that you are loved and blessed.

Advent Scripture of Joy

Zephaniah 3:14-20

Experience Joy

Gratitude Creates Joy and a Desire to Bless Others

Have the words to the Responsive Reading projected or printed, available to all. Gather Ziploc bags, notes of encouragement, variety of travel-size toothbrushes, toothpaste, baby wipes, first-aid kits, minipacks of tissues, trail mix snacks, cracker snack

packs, dried fruit snacks, granola bars, water bottles, hand warmers, deodorant, lip balm, combs, fragrance-free lotions, socks, underwear, T-shirts, gloves, hats, or gum.

Activity: Make Blessing Bags—full of essential items for those in need. When done, pray for the people who will receive your blessing bags. Congregants may take Blessing Bags to hand out to those they see in need in their community.

Think/Pair/Share

*The key word is **think**. Allow time for all to process and then **share** their thoughts about questions for reflection.*

Reflection Questions

1. Describe a time that you received with joy.
2. Describe a time that you experienced joy in giving. We are called to love each person placed in our path.
3. Describe how you can bless others in your life.

Responsive Reading

Leader: God of generosity, you provide for all of my needs. You teach me how to give and receive with joy. Daily you remind me:

Congregation:

Express gratitude.

Bless others.

Speak lovingly.

Hymn of Transformation

“Once in Royal David’s City”

CCS 429

OR “View the Present through the Promise”

CCS 401

OR “Tomorrow Christ Is Coming”

CCS 406

Message of Joy

Based on Zephaniah 3:14-20

Disciples’ Generous Response

Photos to share: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/nz2oq77abpmb8kz/>

DGR%20Photos%20for%202012-12-21.zip?dl=0

Statement

Today's Disciples' Generous Response story comes from Apostle Carlos Enriche Mejia who serves the Central and South America Mission Field.

The whole world has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, many people have been infected, others have lost their loved ones to the disease.

This situation still keeps many of us at home, taking care of ourselves and our families; church activities and worship services at buildings in many places are still suspended, and up until now it has been impossible to hold them in person; schools, companies, and businesses are closed; this left many people out of work and without an income. The lack of food has been the worst. All pastors cared for our members and it was necessary to resort to using reserves from local offerings to feed families.

Brother Gonzalo Mejia, President of the Central America Mission Center made an invitation to all Pastors of the rural areas to encourage members who grow staple grains to give according to their capacity, to provide for sisters and brothers from congregations in the urban areas, who worked in maquiladora factories, were out of work, and were struggling to feed their families.

The response was immediate, pastors of the Copan area in Honduras, where we have three rural congregations, called to tell us that they had more than two thousand pounds of food they collected from among themselves and communities of people who are not members of any church.

We took all necessary precautions and drove there. We took two vehicles to bring this food and, let me tell you brothers and sisters, it was a unique experience to see the joy of the people sharing. But it was even more surprising that after loading the vehicles, the pastor told me, "Apostle, the brothers and sisters joyously collected cash to help," and he gave me the equivalent of about \$35.00 USD. This amount may not seem like much money, but for the difficult financial circumstances they live in, this represents almost six days' worth of salary for one person.

I believe the witness in action of these brothers and sisters speak to their generosity, solidarity, and the joy of supporting people in need.

Brothers and sisters, this whole experience reminded me of the Macedonian Church who, in the midst of a great trial of affliction, poured out its generosity and provided for other people with joy.

- How have you lived out this pandemic in your community?
- What are the biggest needs you have seen among our members and the people in your community?
- How are you or your congregation responding to end the suffering being experienced at this time?

It is wonderful what Doctrine and Covenants 163:9 tells us:

Faithful disciples respond to an increasing awareness of the abundant generosity of God by sharing according to the desires of their hearts; not by commandment or constraint. Break free of the shackles of conventional culture that mainly promote self-serving interests. Give generously according to your true capacity. Eternal joy and peace await those who grow in the grace of generosity that flows from compassionate hearts without thought of return.

During the Disciples' Generous Response, we focus on aligning our heart with God's heart. Our offerings are more than meeting budgets or funding mission. Through our offerings we are able to tangibly express our gratitude to God who is the giver of all.

As we share our mission tithes either by placing money in the plates or through eTithing, use this time to thank God for the many gifts received in life. Our hearts grow aligned with God's when we gratefully receive and faithfully respond by living Christ's mission.

Blessing and Receiving of Local and Worldwide Mission Tithes

For additional ideas, see Disciples' Generous Response Tools on the church's website.

Hymn

"Go, Tell It on the Mountain"

CCS 409

OR “Angels We Have Heard on High”
OR “When the Present Holds No Promise”

CCS 427
CCS 430

Prayer of Blessing

Response

Postlude

Readers Theater

by David Loy

Readers theater is a style of theater in which the actors present dramatic readings of narrative material without costumes, props, scenery, or special lighting. Actors use vocal expression to help the audience understand the story.

Each actor will have a script from which to read. The scripts may be in identical handheld folders or on music stands in front of each actor. Hand gestures are allowed but other movement by the actors is not necessary. Identical or similar clothing is encouraged.

Because there is no movement, the focus is on the vocal properties of the actors. Similar voice quality and intonation will enhance the outcome of the theater presentation.

Reader 1 portrays a generally positive person.

Reader 2 portrays a generally negative person.

Reader 3 portrays a generally practical person.

Third Sunday of Advent 2021 —Joy

Reader 1—*Hands candlelighter to Reader 2, who lights the Advent Candle of Joy.*

Reader 1—Good morning, how was your week?

Reader 2—Remember when we talked about Jesus’s love last week and that I am
supposed to love that guy who really gets on my nerves?

Reader 1 & Reader 3—Yeah?

Reader 2—Well, I tried to treat him as Jesus would have, and I found out the guy isn't nearly as bad as I thought. Not sure I can say "I love you" yet, but...

Reader 1—That's wonderful. Don't worry, it gets easier the more you try.

Reader 3—I surveyed my friends and asked if they knew about agape love. Not many of them did, so I explained it to them.

Reader 1—Wow! That's terrific! Did it give you any joy to do that?

Reader 3—Joy? I don't know that I would say that, but it did feel good.

Reader 1—I asked about joy because that's what this Advent Sunday is about.

Reader 2—You mean happiness, laughing, that sort of thing?

Reader 1—Not exactly. It's a different kind of joy.

Reader 3—More like "well-being" than "delight"?

Reader 1—Yes, but it's about how Jesus talks about joy. The best thing is that both of you have already started down the road to Jesus's kind of joy.

Reader 2 and Reader 3—Huh?

Reader 1—This joy goes together with the love we talked about last week. Let me read from the Bible in the Gospel of John, chapter 15:

"As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete."

Reader 3—I think I get it! God's love for Jesus is the same as Jesus has for us. Right?

Reader 1—Yep, keep going

Reader 3—And...

Reader 2—...If we love as Jesus taught, we will have joy?

Reader 1—Yes, by keeping The Great Commandment we will have joy.

Reader 3—Is that the one that says...We are to **love** the Lord with all our heart, soul, and mind and also to **love** our neighbor as our self.

Reader 2—I don't even know my neighbors.

Reader 1—Well, it's a good time to meet them and show them some love.

Reader 2—Really?

Reader 1—And "neighbor" refers to everyone on the planet. When you really love and care for all people equal to yourself, you'll...

Reader 3 and Reader 2—...experience joy!

Reader 1—Exactly! You do get it!

Reader 2—So that's what I felt when I delivered the food to those families and was kind to the guy that used to bug me.

Reader 3—And when I told my friends about God's love?

Reader 1—Yes, that's it!

Reader 3—This Advent stuff is really educational...

Reader 2—...and fun!

Reader 1—Just wait for next week, it is my favorite one.

Reader 2 & Reader 3—What is it?

Reader 1—You'll just have to wait and see.

Reader 2—OK.

Reader 1 to Reader 3—I know you wouldn't ask me but, would you like to light the
candle next week?

Reader 3—Thank you for asking, that would be great.

Reader 1—Be good this week!

Reader 2—You bet.

Reader 3—I will, I want more of that joy.

SERMON AND CLASS HELPS

Year C—Old Testament

Third Sunday in Advent

Zephaniah 3:14–20

Exploring the Scripture

Zephaniah is part of the Book of the Twelve, a collection of writings credited to writers known as minor prophets. Theologians and scholars have differing opinions about who authored it and when it was written. However, there is reasonable agreement it was likely written between 640 and 609 BCE. Similarly, there is general agreement that it was written to the people of Judah, who experienced domination and oppression by the Assyrians and Babylonians.

Most of the book is written in strong language, suggesting God's judgment cannot be avoided and was to take place soon. The people are called into obedience and repentance from attitudes and actions such as idolatry, corruption, and injustice. The author then moves to a reassuring promise (today's passage) that everything will turn out okay because "The Lord, your God, is in your midst" (v. 17).

For some, the Old Testament is a collection of writings depicting God as a merciless being whom we should fear. But here we have Zephaniah in which the author poignantly portrays the character of God as loving, exalting the lowly, and wishing to protect God's children.

Yes, God wants people to follow God's counsel and strive to do God's will. But more importantly, God wants to bring us to a spirit of joy without fear. God does this by being "in your midst" (v. 17). Even while faced with trials and distress, oppression, and lack of food and water, God reassures the people that God is with us.

The people of Judah were facing great challenges. Many of us, especially in Western countries, experience a life of comparative ease and comfort. By reflecting on this story from Zephaniah, we can emphasize two thoughts.

First, we can feel connected through prayer with the people of the world who are indeed suffering the same challenges faced by the people of Judah. We can work to become God's hands and feet to "remove disaster from you" (v. 18) and turn mourning into dancing.

Second, we recognize that God's desires are for all people. As Zephaniah puts it, "I will make you renowned and praised among all the people of the earth" (v. 20). The prophet did not say *above* others, but *among* all the people.

This is a good passage for us to consider today, the third Sunday of Advent, because Jesus Christ is God in our midst. Jesus was called Emmanuel—God with us. God took human form to be fully "in your midst" (v. 15) and bless all people and show us the way to complete joy, hope, love, and peace.

Regardless of our circumstances, we can accept that God is in our midst. Because of that, we need not fear. Instead, we can experience joy in unbelievable ways. We can “rejoice with all (our) heart” (v. 14) and be free of fear. This is good news for any day and any age.

Central Ideas

1. God is a loving God who cares for those who are oppressed, downtrodden, and suffering in the world—whatever that may look like.
2. God yearns to “be in your midst” or incarnate. God does not want to stand far off, but “yearns to draw [us] close so that wounds may be healed, emptiness filled, and hope strengthened” (Doctrine and Covenants 163:10a).

Questions for the Speaker

1. When did you experience a time you were fearful, but because of the presence of the Holy Spirit “in your midst,” that fear was replaced with peace and perhaps even joy?
2. How might the Community of Christ Mission Initiatives and Enduring Principles provide guidance and a framework for disciples to be representatives of God among people?
3. Today’s scripture suggests people can rejoice even amid uncertainty, conflict, and pain. What are some ways you can suggest to help listeners experience such a way of life?

SACRED SPACE:

A Resource for Small-group Ministry

Year C, Old Testament

Third Week of Advent

Zephaniah 3:14–20 NRSV

Gathering

Welcome

Advent is a season of waiting in expectation for the coming of light into a darkened world in the form of the infant Jesus. Advent is spent anticipating and spiritually preparing for the arrival of the Christ-child. Scriptures, symbols, and hymns help make Advent a time of expectation for Christ's birth, rather than a frenzy of holiday tasks.

The Advent season begins four Sundays before Christmas and is observed each Sunday until Christmas day. An Advent wreath with four candles and one Christ candle in the center often is used to observe the weeks of Advent. One candle is lit each week until all are burning brightly on Christmas day.

Prayer for Peace

Ring a bell or chime three times slowly.

Light the peace candle.

Igniter of the first flame,

You who gives oxygen to fire, you who gives fig trees fruit, you who gives expectant people hope, grant peace to those who wait in despair. As we celebrate joy, we know many struggle to feel your joy and peace. They struggle to find their voice in the world because they have lost the joy of singing and shouting excitedly!

But you are faithful, God. You will restore joy to those who have lost it, you will bring peace to the nations and return joy to lives in despair. Excite us anew, oh God, that we might share our joy with others and work for the kind of peace that delights you. As the potter forms clay, form us into a peaceful community that embraces and exudes peace. Pump us full of oxygen again, so that the peace flame may spark and grow and spread to all this season.

Amen.

—Caleb and Tiffany Brian

Spiritual Practice

Journaling: Pregnant Waiting

Materials:

- Advent wreath or ring for four candles
- One white candle to put in the center of the wreath
- Paper
- Pens or pencils

Light the third candle of Advent and say:

Today we light the third candle of Advent. This candle symbolizes Joy. May we share the joy in our lives with others.

Read the following to the group:

Just as birth is painful and joyous at the same time, life is a paradox full of joy and pain that live side by side. Joy is cultivated from within each of us as is our pain. Joy can come from journeying with God in ways that bring healing from pain.

As we companion with God, we experience anew the love and acceptance that has always been with us. The Christ child represents joy in our lives and in the world. Christ teaches us that we are all children of God, and that all are loved. “But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people’” (Luke 2:10 NRSV).

Pass out papers and pens and ask:

When do you feel in touch with the joy inside of you? Share a story of when you have felt that joy in your life.

Give the group 5 minutes to journal. Invite them to share their thoughts and feelings.

Sharing Around the Table

Zephaniah 3:14–20 NRSV

Sing aloud, O daughter Zion;

shout, O Israel!

Rejoice and exult with all your heart,

O daughter Jerusalem!

The LORD has taken away the judgments against you,

he has turned away your enemies.

The king of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst;

you shall fear disaster no more.

On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:

Do not fear, O Zion;

do not let your hands grow weak.

The LORD, your God, is in your midst,

a warrior who gives victory;

he will rejoice over you with gladness,

he will renew you in his love;
he will exult over you with loud singing
as on a day of festival.
I will remove disaster from you,
so that you will not bear reproach for it.
I will deal with all your oppressors
at that time.
And I will save the lame
and gather the outcast,
and I will change their shame into praise
and renown in all the earth.
At that time I will bring you home,
at the time when I gather you;
for I will make you renowned and praised
among all the peoples of the earth,
when I restore your fortunes
before your eyes, says the LORD.

Advent continues, and so does our call to preparation. Most of the book of Zephaniah is written in strong language, suggesting God's judgment cannot be avoided and would take place soon. The people are called into obedience and repentance from attitudes and actions such as idolatry, corruption, and injustice. In today's passage, however, the author moves to a reassuring promise that everything will turn out okay because, "The Lord, your God, is in your midst" (v. 17).

The author of Zephaniah poignantly portrays the character of God as loving, exalting the lowly, and wishing to protect God's children. Yes, God wants people to follow God's counsel and strive to do God's will. More importantly, God wants to bring us to a spirit of joy without fear. God does this by being present with us.

The people of Judah were facing great challenges. Many of us, especially in Western countries, experience a life of comparative ease and comfort. By reflecting on this story from Zephaniah, we can emphasize two thoughts.

First, we can feel connected through prayer with the people of the world who are indeed suffering the same challenges faced by the people of Judah. We can work to become God's hands and feet to "remove disaster from you" (v. 18) and turn mourning into dancing.

Second, we recognize that God's desires are for all people. As Zephaniah puts it, "I will make you renowned and praised among all the people of the earth" (v. 20). The prophet did not say *above* others, but *among* all the people.

Regardless of our circumstances, we can accept that God is in our midst. Because of that, we need not fear. Instead, we can experience joy in unbelievable ways. We can "rejoice...with all [our] heart" (v. 14) and be free of fear. This is good news for any day and any age.

Questions

1. Share about a time when you were fearful, but because the presence of the Holy Spirit was "in your midst," the fear was replaced with peace and perhaps even joy?

2. What are ways you might connect with the people of the world (your community) who are indeed experiencing struggle and challenge?
3. What would it look like in your context to fully acknowledge and live out the belief that God's desires are for all people?

Sending

Generosity Statement

Faithful disciples respond to an increasing awareness of the abundant generosity of God by sharing according to the desires of their hearts; not by commandment or constraint.

—Doctrine and Covenants 163:9

The offering basket is available if you would like to support ongoing small-group ministries as part of your generous response.

This offering prayer is adapted from A Disciple's Generous Response:

God of our discipleship,

As we navigate our world of debt and consumerism, help us to save wisely, spend responsibly, and give generously. In this way may we prepare for the future and create a better tomorrow for our families, friends, the mission of Christ, and the world.

Amen.

Invitation to Next Meeting

Closing Hymn

Community of Christ Sings 401, "View the Present through the Promise"

Closing Prayer

Optional Additions Depending on Group

- Sacrament of the Lord's Supper
- Thoughts for Children

Communion

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Invitation to Communion

All are welcome at Christ's table. The Lord's Supper, or Communion, is a sacrament in which we remember the life, death, resurrection, and continuing presence of Jesus Christ. In Community of Christ, we also experience Communion as an opportunity to renew our baptismal covenant and to be formed as disciples who live Christ's mission. Others may have different or added understandings within their faith traditions. We invite all who participate in the Lord's Supper to do so in the love and peace of Jesus Christ.

We share in Communion as an expression of blessing, healing, peace, and community. In preparation let's sing a hymn 523 from *Community of Christ Sings*, "As We Gather at Your Table."

Thoughts for Children

Materials:

- Hot Chocolate packets

Say: Today is the third Sunday in Advent. Advent is a time of waiting, when we prepare ourselves for the coming of Jesus at Christmastime. Each Sunday of Advent we will focus on a different theme. Each theme represents something Jesus brings to the world.

On the third Sunday in Advent, we remember the Joy Jesus brought into the world. Something that brings me joy this time of year is hot chocolate! When you drink hot chocolate on a cold day, what does it feel like? How does it make you feel?

Affirm all answers.

Like a warm cup of hot chocolate on a cold winter's night, joy from Jesus provides comfort and warmth even when life is sad or hard. I am going to give you each a packet of hot chocolate to make later when you have permission that it is a good time. When you drink your hot chocolate, reflect on the things that bring you joy and share a grateful prayer to God for those things.

Name: Andrea Compton

Comment: To Whom It May Concern,I am writing to ask that you please vote no on HSB 542. This bill will severely impact the ability of schools to serve the needs of all of Iowa's students from the gifted and talented student to the special education student and everyone inbetween. All students are general education students first and since the majority of all students educational day is spent in the general education classroom, it is extremely important for the outcome of education in Iowa that the Instructional Supports and Media Supports divisions in the AEA are not eliminated. These divisions support teachers and students in best practices in instruction in the classroom and provide professional learning to teachers and staff so that they are ready to meet the challenges of today's classrooms. The new LETRS training that the state is currently rolling out is a tremendous support to our educational system, but training alone will not move the teacher's learning to the classroom, there has to be onsite support and instruction in order for teachers to implement the learning in their classrooms. Who will do this if not the AEA Instructional support teams? Our small schools in Iowa are dependent on AEA Instructional and Media supports in order to have student and teacher support in the area of instruction as they are not able to hire curriculum directors or professional development providers for their staff. The classroom libraries are minimal at best and it's the media supports division they turn to when they need books for students to read and for accomodations for lagging readers with audio books and online text. What will they do if they supports are not available? A vast number of our small rural districts support students who have no books at home and the AEA provides this rich reading material directly to classrooms so students are able to have access to it regardless of their situation. In Science, the VAST curriculum is state of the art top quality Science instructional material that provides for experimentation, inquiry, and all the things young minds need to build a scientific mindset, yet this bill would eliminate that learning from our schools and students. The portion of the bill that increases teacher pay would be instrumental in holding on to good teachers and convincing new teachers to stay in the state, but do not make it a one time only payout. School districts have no way to sustain these increases and reverting back to their original pay after one year is only going to anger them and push them farther away from the state. Should there be changes in the AEA's? Possibly, but work together with AEA Chiefs and teams to build a system that benefits ALL students, teachers, staffs, schools, parents, and communities rather than rip them apart. Again, please vote no on the current version of the bill and work with the AEA's to create a system that is good for ALL of Iowa education!

AEA Services NOW

For Students

- Academic & Social/Emotional/Behavior Supports
- Assistive Technology
- Emergency Shelter Classrooms
- Hearing Services
- Juvenile Detention Center Education
- Occupational Therapy
- Physical Therapy
- Speech Language Services
- Therapeutic Classroom

For Educators

- Athletic Coaching Certification
- Bloodborne Pathogen Training
- Computer Science
- Supports for District Requirements & Implementation
- Training
- Resources
- Content Specific Trainings (Literacy, Math, Science)
- Curriculum Support (Literacy, Math, Science, English Language Learning)
- Digital Learning
- Early Childhood & School Age Special Education Consultation
- Gifted & Talented Program Support and Training
- Graphic Design & Printing
- Paraeducator Certification & Training
- School Psychology Supports
- School Social Work Supports
- Substitute Teacher Authorization
- Support for New Teachers
- Support for Business Office

For Families

- Case Coordination for NICU babies
- College & Career Readiness Supports
- Early ACCESS Services for Infants and Toddlers
- Family & Educator Partnership
- Post-Secondary Transition Support

For Schools

- Classroom Book Sets
- Coaching and Consultation for Infrastructure Development, Leadership Development, Universal Instruction, Intervention Systems and Assessment/ Data-based Decision Making
- Data & Assessment
- Early Literacy Supports
- Evidence-based Math Instruction
- Library & Digital Resources
- Audiobooks
- Ebooks
- Children's & Professional Books for Loan
- Digital Resources (encyclopedias, articles, videos)
- Special Education Evaluation
- Van Delivery to All Buildings
- Graphic Design & Printing
- Substitute Teacher Training
- School Psychology Supports
- School Social Work Supports
- Support for New Teachers

For School Districts

- Career and Technical Education
- Crisis Emergency Support
- Cybersecurity Support
- Emergency Reunification Response
- School Improvement Planning
- Technology Infrastructure Supports

AEA Services AFTER

For Students

- Academic & Social/Emotional/Behavior Supports
- Assistive Technology
- Emergency Shelter Classrooms
- Hearing Services
- Juvenile Detention Center Education
- Occupational Therapy
- Physical Therapy
- Speech Language Services
- Therapeutic Classroom

For Educators

- Athletic Coaching Certification
- Bloodborne Pathogen Training
- Computer Science
- Supports for District Requirements & Implementation
- Training
- Resources
- Content Specific Trainings (literacy, math, science)
- Curriculum Support (literacy, math, science, English language learning)
- Digital Learning
- Early Childhood & School Age Special Education Consultation
- Gifted & Talented Program Support and Training
- Graphic Design & Printing
- Paraeducator Certification & Training
- School Psychology Supports
- School Social Work Supports
- Substitute Teacher Authorization
- Support for New Teachers
- Support for Business Office

For Families

- Case Coordination for NICU babies
- College & Career Readiness Supports
- Early ACCESS Services for Infants and Toddlers
- Family & Educator Partnership
- Post-Secondary Transition Support

For Schools

- Classroom Book Sets
- Coaching and Consultation for Infrastructure Development, Leadership Development, Universal Instruction, Intervention Systems and Assessment/ Data-based Decision Making
- Data & Assessment
- Early Literacy Supports
- Evidence-based Math Instruction
- Library & Digital Resources
- Audiobooks
- Ebooks
- Children's & Professional Books for Loan
- Digital Resources (encyclopedias, articles, videos)
- Special Education Evaluation
- Van Delivery to All Buildings
- Graphic Design & Printing
- Substitute Teacher Training
- School Psychology Supports
- School Social Work Supports
- Support for New Teachers

For School Districts

- Career and Technical Education
- Crisis Emergency Support
- Cybersecurity Support
- Emergency Reunification Response
- School Improvement Planning
- Technology Infrastructure Supports



Iowa's Area
Education
Agencies

*This is not a comprehensive/complete list of all services offered by Iowa's AEAs. For a regularly updated list, please go to lowaaea.org/advocate

Name: Christi Gochenour

Comment: The original intent of the AEAs was not just for Special Education services. In fact, the intent of the AEAs was to provide services in three categories: Educational Services, Media Services, and Special Education Services. This legislation undermines the original intent. If Special Educational Services are the only ones to remain, those services will also be undermined by the ability of schools to pull out of the regions, reducing available resources to all schools. What is being proposed guts the Iowa Education System and takes us backwards, to the 1970s when the AEAs were created. Iowa has always been a leader in education innovation, as well as having a strong student and educator support network. Over the years, our AEAs have evolved with the needs of our students, educators, and schools. They ensured both public and private schools stayed on the forefront of educational research, practice, and student achievement and ensured that schools had the support to implement and sustain this best practices for our students and educators. The Iowa Department of Education is not equipped to support all of Iowa schools with the same localized focus, the same local knowledge, and the same energy that our AEAs are able to do. Our AEAs are equipped with current research, best practice, support and staff. I have attached a list of services we currently use from AEA that we will lose should this bill be approved.

Below are services that our AEA currently provides to support the Missouri Valley Community School District, our students, and our staff. These services are essential and will devastate our students, staff, and programs if we lose them:

1. School Psychologist Resources:

Because of the AEA support, Missouri Valley is able to have our school psychologists provide additional resources for the district outside the role of special education evaluations, including but not limited to

- Essential members of the Missouri Valley CSD Safety Team. We meet monthly and our AEA supported the writing of our District and Building Emergency Operations Plans as well as our District and Building Reunification Plans.
- Provide crisis preparedness, response, and recovery when needed for a variety of situations (student death, staff death, act of violence, natural disaster, etc)
- Mental health work including leading Missouri Valley's Hope Squad program (3 of 4 Hope Squad Advisors are AEA employees), Missouri Valley was the first school district in the State of Iowa to have Hope Squad due to our AEA staff advocating for this program.
- Suicide prevention training for all staff, students in certain classes (high school HOSA students, health class, etc), and offered in the evening to community members
- Suicide risk assessments and behavior threat assessments/screeners
 - Behavior Threat Assessment procedures are directly credited with AEA staff members trained in crisis prevention through AEA classes and the STOP grant funding
- Intervention planning and small group instruction in social skills for students who demonstrate a need for special education evaluation, but were determined by the end of intervention to no longer require special education support;
- Bi-weekly intervention coaching, collaboration, and data review with special education teachers;
- Quarterly trainings for the district's paraeducators, as well as bi-weekly direct coaching
- Written various grants for funding for programs such as Hope Squad, PBIS, Character Strong, and community events such as Social Media & Mental Health, Internet Safety: Human Trafficking and Our Youth, etc.
- Work individually with students on a variety of topics such as mental health, problem-solving, anger management, etc. (85 students in grades 6-12 from August -December 2023)
- Consult with general education and special education teachers and staff on a daily basis regarding a variety of situations

2. School Based Interventionist (SBI):

We contract this position through AEA and the Juvenile Court System. Our SBI is in our Middle School and High School Buildings everyday working with our at-risk students. Because of her knowledge of student behavior, threat assessments, and our at-risk youths, she provides great context as a member of our School Safety Team. The first semester of this school year, she met and worked with 84 students. Last year, she met with 140 students for a total of 887 student

contacts along with 125 parent contacts and 33 outside agency contacts. Examples of how the SBI serves our students includes:

- Provides social/emotional check ins with students
- Functions as the Juvenile Court Liaison for students on probation by providing supports and interventions to help students be successful within the Juvenile Justice System, school, and personally
- Provides peer relationship support
- Organizes the SAT Team (Student Assistance Team) for the middle school and handles the referrals and organizes the monthly meetings
- Monitors student attendance and implements truancy interventions when needed
- Crisis Response
- Safety Team Member
- Completes suicide risk assessments and behavioral threat assessments as member of the team
- Connecting families in need with resources/Coordination of outside services to come into the school when needed
- Hope Squad Advisor
- TeamMates Mentoring Building Coordinator
- Builders Club Advisor (a Kiwanis student leadership group for middle school students)
- ISTEP Advisor (Iowa Students for Tobacco Education and Prevention)

3. School-Based Mental Health Worker:

Missouri Valley is able to share a social worker who comes to the school and meets with at-risk students so parents do not have to take a day off work and students do not miss a half or full day of school for counseling sessions. Currently, our School-Based Mental Health worker meets weekly with many students who require therapy services that improve classroom performance and meet the needs that are difficult to reach in the community due to the long wait lists for providers. Throughout the last five years, she has served 23 students at the elementary school. Missouri Valley also has a financial benefit to this service through sharing dollars

4. Professional Development for Teachers:

Our AEAs provide essential teacher training that allow our staff to provide the best instruction. We are able to work with AEA staff who are experts in math instruction and literacy instruction. Currently, AEA literacy consultants are providing Face-to-Face training with 32 elementary staff members around the science of reading and best practices in reading instruction for all students. Throughout the years, our literacy consultants have provided coaching on special education instruction, reviewing data to ensure students close the skill-gaps, and building capacity within the staff to pass on knowledge to new staff. Thanks to this instruction around evidence-based instruction, curriculum recommendations, fidelity checks, and effective data review, three students have completed a full exit from their special education services this year alone.

5. Early Childhood

AEA Early Childhood consultants have provided professional coaching two times a month both through training and through in-classroom, direct coaching. The results of this collaboration has included early interventions for students across the district (home intervention, MV preschool, and Head Start).

Research demonstrates services provided in preschool and early elementary are critical for prevention of academic non-proficiency later in life, improving student outcomes and reducing special education evaluations. The district currently has two relatively new preschool teachers that rely on the monthly coaching from the AEA to create and deliver support for students.

6. School Improvement Support:

Our AEA provides us with necessary support to collect data and documentation for state and federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requirements. This allows our staff to stay in the classrooms rather than have substitute teachers. The AEA does the hard data work that keeps the expert teachers in the classrooms.

7. Media Services:

AEAs are able to purchase items that schools can't afford. Every week, teachers at Missouri Valley are able to check-out resources from the AEA media for all content areas to support their teaching, saving the district thousands of dollars in material costs. Some examples have included robotic technology that has directly resulted in increasing communication for students who were nonverbal, as well as reading, science, and social studies book kits that have been used across grade levels to meet Iowa's academics standards and supplement curriculum.

8. AEA Print Services:

The AEAs provide printing and laminating services at a discounted rate for schools. We do not have an industrial sized laminator because we can send our materials to the AEA to laminate so much cheaper than we can purchase the printer and laminating film.

9. CTE (Career and Technical Education) Requirement Support:

Our AEAs provide essential support for our Perkins money and RPP money for our CTE programs. Again, they do the heavy lifting so our teachers can stay in their classrooms teaching rather than in a conference doing reports leaving their students with a substitute teacher.

There are so many more essential functions that our AEAs provide and ALL of these services are essential to running the Missouri Valley Schools Education program. To lose one breaks the strong chain of support our students, staff and community deserve.

Name: Julianne Scheer

Comment: To whom it may concern I would like to express my opposition for House Study Bill 542. As a teacher of students with significant needs in addition to a school that supports students with some of the highest ACE, Adverse Childhood Experiences, Iowa Education Agencies such as those that we directly utilize like the Grant Wood AEA, are imperative to ensure that all students to have equitable opportunities to a free and appropriate public education. This Bill should not be considered nor passed without the input and votes from the citizens that are working firsthand in the schools in which careless decisions such as cutting our AEA supports, will be directly impacted. If this Bill is passed it will have many devastating impacts in the development of our students that we will see immediately in our schools and in our communities in the coming years. I would also like to share a letter of support that I wrote to the AEA as a mom who has benefited from the AEA for 6 years now as I have a son with sever autism. Dear AEAMy relationship with you first began as I was a new mom who knew in her heart that her child wasdifferent from other children. With a regression in speech that felt like it suddenly happened over night,the first people that came to our help was the Early Access Team from the AEA. It is with this team that I learned how to interact with my own child as they were the experts, and I was very new to the world of special needs. With weekly visits to our home, or to see my son at his daycare, the Early Access Team taught me the research based skills that I needed to be the best mom I could be for my son who day after day who showed signs that further cemented our feelings that he was on the autism spectrum. It is a humbling experience to be a new mom, to be in school full time, and learn about the world of autism. As my son was going through the diagnosis process, The Early Access team led weekly coaching for myself,our family, and even daycare providers. The Early Access team watched many fearful and worried tears fall from my eyes, and the people that were once strangers, quickly felt like friends whom I looked forward to learning from. These are the people that helped me build a foundation of understanding ofwhat my unique son needed from me in order to begin to understand how he understood the worldaround him.My relationship with you did not end with the Early Access Team, in fact that was only the beginning. As my son turned 3, the strangers that became my friends, prepared me to transition my son into our public education system here in Cedar Rapids. As a frightened mother of a nonspeaking child with severe autism, I was terrified of the transition to school, but you guided me through it all with your incredible staff who reassured me that my son would be in good hands. Of course you were right, when my son started school, in addition to incredible teachers, my son was placed into a unique preschool classroom that was coached by a team of AEA staff who provided my sons teachers with professional development and coaching in implementing LEAP instructional strategies into the classroom. This research based inclusive way of teaching preschoolers, provided kids with the necessary social skills that would build the foundation of how they would learn to interact with others, no matter a person's ability, by learning how to get a friends attention appropriately, sharing with others, learning to take turns, and even learning to give someone a compliment all while working on meeting Gold Standard Expectations required by the state. This type of preschool was not in every classroom, only a few at the time, but it was specifically designed for inclusivity purposes so that all children were able to learn together. Within the two and a half years that my son was in preschool I met so many more amazing AEA staff. Autism consultants, speech language pathologist, and occupational therapists. All of these people played a key role in the development of my child with the support that they gave my child and his teachers who were responsible for a child with such unique needs as mine.In a twist of fate, when I graduated with my undergraduate degree in education, I began teaching preschool in a LEAP classroom. It is here I met even more of your AEA staff. Physical therapists, literacy consultants, math consultants, special education consultants, speech language pathologist, occupational therapists, school social workers, school psychologists, were all people that had the knowledge of how to meet the needs of all

of the learners in my classroom. These people were the people that I saw within my classroom walls, but they are not the only ones that were utilized through the AEA. Individualized learning materials were created from the graphics and printing team, engaging learning materials were checked out and borrowed from the AEA, sensory tools to help keep kids regulated and ready to learn were checked out from the AEA. To receive those services there were many staff members working behind the scenes to provide those materials that I desperately needed to meet the needs of my students. As my career has led me to teach in a Level 3 self-contained special education classroom that serves students who all share characteristics of being on the autism spectrum. The weight of the proposed cuts, and impact that it will have on public education as a whole is frightening. I wish I could help others understand that cutting the proposed positions in the AEA will only mean that those left at the AEA will not be able to do their jobs fully without the help of those behind the scenes. Each person at the AEA plays a vital role in its day to day operations, and every employee's ultimate goal is to serve children, and help meet their individual needs. This year I began working with one of your incredible Digital Learning Consultants as I am looking for unique ways to keep students engaged in learning using technology. With the help of his team, not only has student engagement been increased in the classroom, but it has also helped me find some of my students' learning access points and really understand all of the knowledge that my students hold within themselves that they are not able to communicate without the help of technology. This team gave my students the ability to understand and demonstrate their learning. With the tools that I have been given and the skills that I have learned from your staff, I have been able to set up more independent learning opportunities for my unique learners to help them gain independence, but also as a strategy to combat our short staffing crisis. In so many ways your staff has saved me as a teacher, and has quite literally saved children. The Challenging Behavior Team at the AEA has literally saved the lives of children that I know by supporting the teachers that needed further learning on how to help children with some of the most challenging behavioral needs. How could anyone overlook how each person at the AEA has such an important role? Each role matters immensely to the success of all children, because all children are general education students first and foremost, aren't they? AEA I am scared of what the implications of the proposed legislation will do to you, to us. The impact will not only be on our education system, but also our economy and communities as a whole. The inequitable opportunities for students will only further divide our community and bring a focus to what makes us different, rather than what brings us together. Public education with the support of the AEA has been able to improve equitable opportunities so that every student is able to access a free and appropriate education, the right that every child has. Without you, I am unsure how to stop the regression of our education system, and how we support the places that always brought children together, our schools. AEA I will not give up in advocating for you, I know how badly we teachers need you, as you are our lifeline to support and student success. With challenging behaviors in every classroom, and learning gaps widening, and skyrocketing diagnosis rates for students with unique needs, support in the state of Iowa is getting smaller and smaller for all of our students. The assumption that starting salaries higher for teachers will keep them in the classroom will simply not work because no amount of money is worth feeling like you are failing your job everyday, and I know firsthand just like every other public school teacher that we simply can't do our jobs without you. AEA we will fail without you, I will fail without. Sincerely, a grateful mother and grateful teacher for all you have done and continue to do, Julie Scheer

Dear AEA-

My relationship with you first began as I was a new mom who knew in her heart that her child was different from other children. With a regression in speech that felt like it suddenly happened over night, the first people that came to our help was the Early Access Team from the AEA. It is with this team that I learned how to interact with my own child as they were the experts, and I was very new to the world of special needs. With weekly visits to our home, or to see my son at his daycare, the Early Access Team taught me the research based skills that I needed to be the best mom I could be for my son who day after day who showed signs that further cemented our feelings that he was on the autism spectrum. It is a humbling experience to be a new mom, to be in school full time, and learn about the world of autism. As my son was going through the diagnosis process, The Early Access team led weekly coaching for myself, our family, and even daycare providers. The Early Access team watched many fearful and worried tears fall from my eyes, and the people that were once strangers, quickly felt like friends whom I looked forward to learning from. These are the people that helped me build a foundation of understanding of what my unique son needed from me in order to begin to understand how he understood the world around him.

My relationship with you did not end with the Early Access Team, in fact that was only the beginning. As my son turned 3, the strangers that became my friends, prepared me to transition my son into our public education system here in Cedar Rapids. As a frightened mother of a non-speaking child with severe autism, I was terrified of the transition to school, but you guided me through it all with your incredible staff who reassured me that my son would be in good hands. Of course you were right, when my son started school, in addition to incredible teachers, my son was placed into a unique preschool classroom that was coached by a team of AEA staff who provided my son's teachers with professional development and coaching in implementing LEAP instructional strategies into the classroom. This research based inclusive way of teaching preschoolers, provided kids with the necessary social skills that would build the foundation of how they would learn to interact with others, no matter a person's ability, by learning how to get a friends attention appropriately, sharing with others, learning to take turns, and even learning to give someone a compliment all while working on meeting Gold Standard Expectations required by the state. This type of preschool was not in every classroom, only a few at the time, but it was specifically designed for

inclusivity purposes so that all children were able to learn together. Within the two and a half years that my son was in preschool I met so many more amazing AEA staff. Autism consultants, speech language pathologist, and occupational therapists. All of these people played a key role in the development of my child with the support that they gave my child and his teachers who were responsible for a child with such unique needs as mine.

In a twist of fate, when I graduated with my undergraduate degree in education, I began teaching preschool in a LEAP classroom. It is here I met even more of your AEA staff. Physical therapists, literacy consultants, math consultants, special education consultants, speech language pathologist, occupational therapists, school social workers, school psychologists, were all people that had the knowledge of how to meet the needs of all of the learners in my classroom. These people were the people that I saw within my classroom walls, but they are not the only ones that were utilized through the AEA. Individualized learning materials were created from the graphics and printing team, engaging learning materials were checked out and borrowed from the AEA, sensory tools to help keep kids regulated and ready to learn were checked out from the AEA. To receive those services there were many staff members working behind the scenes to provide those materials that I desperately needed to meet the needs of my students.

As my career has led me to teach in a Level 3 self-contained special education classroom that serves students who all share characteristics of being on the autism spectrum. The weight of the proposed cuts, and impact that it will have on public education as a whole is frightening. I wish I could help others understand that cutting the proposed positions in the AEA will only mean that those left at the AEA will not be able to do their jobs fully without the help of those behind the scenes. Each person at the AEA plays a vital role in its day to day operations, and every employee's ultimate goal is to serve children, and help meet their individual needs.

This year I began working with one of your incredible Digital Learning Consultants as I am looking for unique ways to keep students engaged in learning using technology. With the help of this team, not only has student engagement been increased in the classroom, but it has also helped me find some of my students' learning access points and really understand all of the knowledge that my students hold within themselves that

they are not able to communicate without the help of technology. This team gave my students the ability to understand and demonstrate their learning. With the tools that I have been given and the skills that I have learned from your staff, I have been able to set up more independent learning opportunities for my unique learners to help them gain independence, but also as a strategy to combat our short staffing crisis. In so many ways your staff has saved me as a teacher, and has quite literally saved children.

The Challenging Behavior Team at the AEA has literally saved the lives of children that I know by supporting the teachers that needed further learning on how to help children with some of the most challenging behavioral needs. How could anyone overlook how each person at the AEA has such an important role? Each role matters immensely to the success of all children, because all children are general education students first and foremost aren't they?

AEA I am scared of what the implications of the proposed legislation will do to you, to us. The impact will not only be on our education system, but also our economy and communities as a whole. The inequitable opportunities for students will only further divide our community and bring a focus to what makes us different, rather than what brings us together. Public education with the support of the AEA has been able to improve equitable opportunities so that every student is able to access a free and appropriate education, the right that every child has. Without you, I am unsure how to stop the regression of our education system, and how we support the places that always brought children together, our schools.

AEA I will not give up in advocating for you, I know how badly we teachers need you, as you are our lifeline to support and student success. With challenging behaviors in every classroom, and learning gaps widening, and skyrocketing diagnosis rates for students with unique needs, support in the state of Iowa is getting smaller and smaller for all of our students. The assumption that starting salaries higher for teachers will keep them in the classroom will simply not work because no amount of money is worth feeling like you are failing your job everyday, and I know firsthand just like every other public school teacher that we simply can't do our jobs without you. AEA we will fail without you, I will fail without.

Sincerely, a grateful mother and grateful teacher for all you have done and continue to do,

Julie Scheer

Name: Kyra Wilcox-Conley

Comment: I am opposed tot he portion of HSB 542 that is focused on dismantling the AEA system. I am in favor of increased teacher pay. Please separate these two critical issues into separate bills so that they may be considered individually.AEAs provide invaluable services to school in special education, media services, and educational services, as current Iowa Code requires. The work of AEAs support ALL students. The rhetoric around this bill from the Governor and Republican legislators is not based in facts. See attachment for details.

FALSE STATEMENTS	FACTS	FACT SOURCES
<p>1. AEAs HAVE NOT BEEN REVIEWED OR HELD ACCOUNTABLE IN THEIR 50 YEAR HISTORY.</p> <p>“These nine regional entities, which operate without meaningful state oversight...” (p. IV)</p>	<p>The AEAs are evaluated regularly by the Department of Education. AEA oversight is the responsibility of AEA Boards who manage AEAs just as a school board manages a school district.</p> <p>Iowa Code, Chapter 273</p> <p>1. The department of education shall develop, in consultation with the area education agencies, and establish an accreditation process for area education agencies by July 1, 1997. At a minimum, the accreditation process shall consist of the following: a. The timely submission by an area education agency of information required by the department on forms provided by the department. b. The use of an accreditation team appointed by the director of the department of education to conduct an evaluation, including an on-site visit of each area education agency. The team shall include, but is not limited to, department staff members, representatives from the school districts served by the area education agency being evaluated, area education agency staff members from area education agencies other than the area education agency that conducts the programs being evaluated for accreditation, and other team members with expertise as deemed appropriate by the director.</p> <p>Iowa AEA Fiscal Research Brief</p> <p>Since 1997, the DE has reviewed the accreditation standards of each AEA. To be accredited by the State Board of Education and maintain accreditation status, an AEA is required to have: • An approved five-year comprehensive plan. • An approved annual budget and plan update. • Approved programs and services following a comprehensive onsite review by an accreditation team.</p>	<p>Iowa Administrative Code, Chapter 273</p> <p>Iowa AEA Fiscal Research Brief, Robinson, January 2024, p.5</p>
<p>2. AEAs WERE CREATED FOR ONE PURPOSE: SPECIAL EDUCATION.</p> <p>“...were created in the 70s to provide special education support for school districts.” (p. IV)</p> <p>“Since 2000, voluntary mergers have reduced the number of AEAs to nine, but their services and infrastructure have grown well beyond the scope of special education to include a wide array of education and media services for school districts across the state.” (p. 30)</p>	<p>Iowa’s AEA system has been charged with providing special education, media, AND educational services since their inception in 1974.</p> <p>Iowa Code, Chapter 273</p> <p>The area education agency board <i>shall furnish educational services</i> and programs as provided in section 273.1, this section, sections 273.3 through 273.8, and chapter 256B to the pupils enrolled in public or nonpublic schools.</p> <p>The area education agency <i>board shall provide for special education services and media services</i> for the local school districts in the area and <i>shall encourage and assist school districts in the area to establish programs for gifted and talented children.</i></p> <p>Legislative Guide-AEAs</p> <p>Area education agencies have the legal status of school corporations. The primary role of AEAs is to provide special education support services to individuals under the age of 21 years, media services to benefit all children from kindergarten through grade 12, and other educational and support services to pupils and education staff; to provide a method of financing the programs and services; and to avoid duplication of programs and services provided by other school corporations. AEAs are authorized by statute to provide other contracted services to school districts. Iowa Code chapter 273 assigns specific powers and duties relating to each of these functions.</p>	<p>Iowa Administrative Code, Chapter 273</p> <p>Legislative Guide-Area Education Agencies, Hanlon, 2018, p. 1</p>

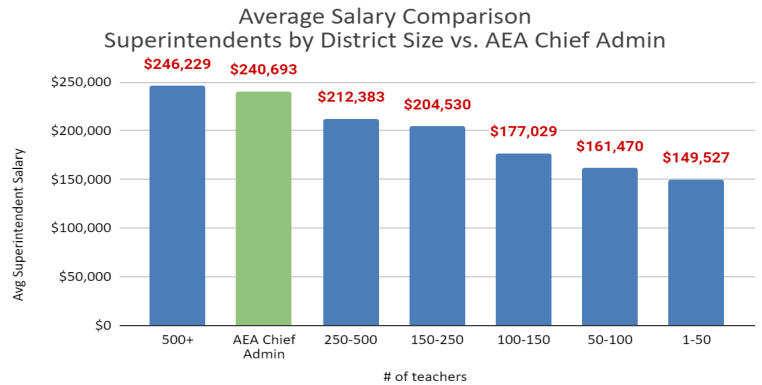
FALSE STATEMENTS	FACTS	FACT SOURCES
<p>3. IOWA SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS ARE FAILING AND THE AEAs ARE SOLELY RESPONSIBLE FOR THAT FAILURE.</p> <p>Iowa students with disabilities are performing below the national average. In the last five years, they've ranked 30th or worse on 9 of 12 national Assessments. (p. V)</p> <p>Data chart (p.30)</p>	<p>Readers should be wary of this statement and the information on this chart.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No sources are included for any of the data (Students with disabilities NAEP scores for 2019 & 2022) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What does the score represent? Math, reading, grades 4, 8, and/or 12, or an aggregate score of some or all of these items? This is unknown. The vertical axis has a scale that is truncated to exacerbate differences in scores, which in reality, are likely statistically insignificant (chart scores range from approximately 210-223) From the NAEP site, <i>“NAEP assessment results are reported as average scores on a 0-500 scale (reading, mathematics at grades 4 and 8, U.S. history, and geography) or on a 0-300 scale (mathematics at grade 12, science, writing, technology and engineering literacy, and civics).</i> Average scores of a data set will pool towards the middle of the scale. In exporting NAEP data for all states for grades 4 and 8 reading and math, no data or any aggregate of the data for the comparison states (National, Georgia, Nebraska, South Dakota, Tennessee, and Texas) matches the scores for these states on this chart. The reader also has no context for why those particular comparison states have been chosen. The adjusted special education per-pupil expenditure is not cited. What is the source of this data? Any high school statistics course would cover these issues as ways in which data is frequently manipulated to skew readers’ perceptions, as well as to paint an inaccurate and incomplete picture with data. Data presented in this one-sided manner are <u>always</u> motivated by deceiving the reader into seeing only the information that makes the author’s case. AEAs work hand-in-hand with school districts to provide special education services. Placing blame for any real or imagined poor performance of our students is not the sole responsibility of the AEAs; rather, it is a shared responsibility of districts and AEAs. 	<p>NAEP</p> <p>NAEP Report Cards</p>
<p>4. AEA ADMINISTRATOR SALARIES ARE BLOATED.</p> <p>“And AEAs have grown well beyond their core mission of helping students with disabilities, creating top-heavy organizations with high administrative Expenses.” (p. V)</p> <p>The average compensation package for an AEA chief is more than \$312,000. For comparison, the average public school district Superintendent’s total compensation is almost \$100,000 less.</p>	<p>Using Educational Statistic Reports from 2022-23 on the Department of Education website:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Average 2022-23 compensation for AEA Chief Administrators is \$294,000, not more than \$312,000 Average compensation for Superintendents is not available on the DE site, so salary comparisons (vs. total compensation) are the only publicly available metric. The total for the 9 AEA Chief salaries in 2022-23: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$2,166,239 The total for the 240 full-time Superintendent salaries in 2022-23: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$44,451,752 Chief Administrator salaries are a minor expense in overall AEA and education spending. They are also comparable to Superintendent salaries in Iowa’s larger school districts. Information below provides greater context for Superintendent and AEA Chief salaries. 	<p>Iowa Department of Education PK-12 Education Statistics 2022-23</p> <p>Reports: IA Public School District Superintendent Information 22-23</p> <p>IA AEA Chief Administrator Information 22-23</p> <p>IA Public School & AEA Teacher Counts & Salaries 22-23</p>

AEA Chief Administrators vs. Superintendent Salary Analysis

		Average salary 2022-23
# Superintendents	248	\$191,861
# AEA Chief Administrators	9	\$240,693

However, Superintendent salaries are quite dependent on the size of the district and the experience of the Superintendent. Using the number of full time teachers as a grouping framework, average Superintendent salaries look like the charts below. Iowa's AEAs are not the same size, just like school districts are not the same size, but all AEAs have a professional staff of a minimum of 150 (estimated, based on review of AEA staff directories), making a fair salary comparison group Superintendents with teaching staffs of 150 or more. In that context, AEA Chief Administrator salaries are competitive with district Superintendents.

# of full-time teachers in district	Avg Superintendent Salary	Total Supt.
500+	\$246,229	12
AEA Chief Admin	\$240,693	9
250-500	\$212,383	14
150-250	\$204,530	20
100-150	\$177,029	45
50-100	\$161,470	96
1-50	\$149,527	61



		Average salary 2022-23
# Superintendents (<150 teachers)	46	\$221,047
# AEA Chief Administrators	9	\$240,693

AEA Chief Administrators have slightly higher average salaries than Superintendents in similarly staffed districts. The larger the district, the higher the average salary. Comparing the nine Chief Administrators salaries to the top nine salaries for Superintendents:

School/AEA	2022-23 Salary
Central Rivers AEA	\$280,644
Cedar Rapids Comm School District	\$277,946
Waukee Comm School District	\$271,810
Des Moines Independent Comm School District	\$268,450
Grant Wood AEA	\$258,044
Linn-Mar Comm School District	\$255,954
Sioux City Comm School District	\$250,000
Ankeny Comm School District	\$245,400
Council Bluffs Comm School District	\$244,175
Northwest AEA	\$243,130
Marshalltown Comm School District	\$242,105
AEA 13 Green Hills AEA	\$240,000
Mississippi Bend AEA	\$239,722
Davenport Comm School District	\$239,000
Heartland Area Education Agency	\$237,811
Great Prairie AEA	\$228,072
Prairie Lakes AEA	\$219,816
Keystone AEA	\$219,000