

Dear Labor Committee,

I was born in West Des Moines, and have spent the majority of my life as an Iowa resident. My mother was a teacher, and my father was an elementary school principal for over 30 years in the Des Moines school system.

Today, I have many family and friends who dedicate their lives to helping others. Becoming a teacher is a calling that is not meant for everyone, and a job that I am quite certain cannot be performed by those without a special gift.

My husband and I moved back to Iowa to raise our children for three reasons:

1. Many of the family members we cherish are here in Iowa
2. The community is caring and supportive to children and families
3. Iowa was leading the nation in student achievement

Since moving back to the area in 2000, we have seen hard working teachers doing the best they can to respond to increased regulation/standards and decreased funding.

I recognize that we have a need to manage cost in our state. Anyone who has a household budget understands that money only goes so far. I sincerely believe that there are other ways to find efficiencies and still ensure the best for our children and our communities.

The perception of others is their reality. Let me share with you how this is being perceived by many:

- This is all an effort to deconstruct the public school system to make way for charter schools and vouchers.
- Republicans know that they may only have the majority for a short while so they are pushing through what they can, as fast as they can.

I hear so many people today saying things like "We have a Republican majority. They are going to do what they want, and there is nothing any of us can do about it".

I know that this is not all true. I am very aware of the pressure that you receive from the private sector who perceive the wages of some government workers as unfair or not in alignment with the industry. Should this be addressed? Absolutely. Sweeping mandates rather than having difficult conversations can be perceived as cowardly.

Here is what most are asking of you:

- **Slow down** - This does not need to be rushed and passed without considering modifications or adequate discussion.
- **Listen** - Be open to the concerns of others. Show some class and empathy by hearing from those who will be most impacted. Seek to understand other points of view.
- **Educate** - If there are compelling reasons for portions of this bill, share with others in a way that helps to bridge the divide rather than making it larger. Show data that explains your position.

- **Be flexible** - Be willing to compromise on portions of the legislation. Find common ground that helps you to achieve your goal without dramatic change that will impact the livelihood of great people here in Iowa.
- **Research** - Understand the impact this type of change has had on other states. Determine what modifications if any can be made to avoid negative outcomes.

I believe in the qualities of Iowans. I know that political affiliation is not what drives us. Iowans are driven by hard work and caring for our community. Let's set a positive standard for the rest of the country rather than proving that division is the only path forward.

Show us your Iowa values, and honor the role in which your constituents have placed you.

Best regards,
Jennifer Burkle