Iowa House Representatives,

I am asking you to vote against the revised House version of the AEA bill, House File 2612.

Any system can be improved, but to be improved it needs to have well defined problems based on complete and accurate data provided by the users of the system. This bill is based on faulty and incomplete data and needs documented data from the wide variety of Iowans who actually use and work within the AEA system. It was written by an out of state source without Iowans input and does not have the best interests of Iowa children in mind.

Please look at how media services and technology support regular and special education students instead of just preserving the AEA special education services. I worked for Grant Wood AEA for 29 years as a speech-language pathologist. This was a seamless integrated service as an AEA employee. As an employee, I borrowed assistive devices to try out with nonverbal students to help them communicate, without the parents or school districts having to buy the devices. I checked out toys from the toy library in media services to teach parents and caregivers how to use toys to increase their child’s speech and language development. I used media services to print out homework assignments for the students and caregivers in our preschool phonology (speech) groups. I was able to print these materials at a reduced cost in comparison to having them printed by an outside private source. Speech therapy materials that I created to target goals for specific students were laminated for greater durability and lower cost than what was available in the private sector. These private services for printing and lamination are not always available in rural areas.

Please form a task force comprised of a variety of Iowans, not just legislators, to access the AEA’s needs before destroying a system and impacting thousands of students, families and employees. Please give this task force time and the resources to fully explore the needs of the AEAs. This issue needs months not weeks of study.

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