Good afternoon. My name is Emma LeValley, and I am a resident of Des Moines, IA. I have lived in Iowa my whole life: I went to Waukee High School and then Simpson College, and I am now in my second year of teaching elementary and middle school music at Prairie City-Monroe Community School District in rural Iowa. I am writing to you today concerning the proposed collective bargaining bill and its changes.

I was willing to go into debt knowing that my salary would never be sky-high as an educator because educating the future of our state and our country is worth it to me, and because I know it’s what I was meant to do. I feel that teaching our children to be respectful and responsible contributors to society, proficient readers, capable mathematicians, lifelong learners, artistic creators, passionate doers, and caring friends is one of the most important things we can do as a society to ensure a successful future for all.

However, I also feel that with this proposed bill, any of the remaining monetary advantages to being a teacher are being compromised. It not only guts the ability to bargain for benefits like health insurance, vacation time and seniority perks, as well as work conditions such as hours and overtime pay, but also makes it easier to terminate teachers for disciplinary standards they had no say in. The rights of teachers in these disciplinary situations are affected as well, requiring teachers to go to district courts to appeal and cause unnecessary monetary strains on anyone going through that process. The Iowa GOP claims this bill restores local control, but collective bargaining *is* a demonstration of local control. They claim it will lessen the burden of Iowa’s financial situation, but you would be hard-pressed to find an average, everyday working Iowan – any of your constituents - who agrees that teachers are the ones making too much money or getting too many benefits. I make $35,000 a year working long hours in two different elementary schools and with 800+ children. Do not try to tell me that the teachers’ union’s bargaining on my behalf is the burden. This legislation will scare future quality teachers from the field. Without bargaining power and with an already-low average salary, I don’t blame the young adults leaving the field of education to seek jobs in other fields where their salary and benefits reflect the hard work they put into it; however, I also feel bad for the Iowa children who will likely be affected by the teacher shortage and instability that befell Wisconsin and Kansas with similarly-adopted legislation.

All actual elements of the bill aside, the way this bill has been brought about is honestly one of the main reasons I am upset. Blindsiding unions and drafting it without much discussion of your actual intentions to slice their power apart does not demonstrate the compromise and collaboration our country so desperately needs. This proposed legislation screams partisan politics – and not only that, but the public forum hosted for people to share their grievances was at 10:00 AM on a weekday, a time that most public sector employees and the teachers who so desperately need to give input are working. I am so disappointed in the complete lack of respect for the “hardworking Americans” that Republicans of today love to pretend to represent. Please reconsider your support for this bill and at least work with Democrats to compromise before going through with this. Otherwise, I fear for the future of quality education in Iowa.

Thank you for your time,

Emma LeValley