

For Immediate Release
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IEA Responds to Westerberg Letter

Letter Sent to Teachers Misleads on IEA Position, Misses the Point on Concerns

Boise, ID—Many teachers around Idaho were surprised to find an unsolicited letter in their inboxes recently from Richard Westerberg, a member of the State Board of Education and the Chair of the Task Force for Improving Education. The Idaho Education Association has received numerous questions from teachers regarding this letter, especially about the proposed Tiered Certification rule.

Mr. Westerberg's letter conveniently omits the fact that the IEA has consistently voiced opposition to the specific Tiered Certification rule currently under consideration. The truth is that the IEA does not support the current plan because, among other reasons, it ties a teacher's certification (state license) to local administrator's evaluations (an employment metric). "Local districts have responsibility for employment and job performance, while certification should be under the purview of the state," said IEA President Penni Cyr. "Both of these responsibilities are important, but they are also very different and should never be combined or confused."

While Mr. Westerberg is correct in stating that the Idaho Education Association was among the stakeholders who supported the Governor's Task Force Recommendations, including the concepts of Tiered Certification and Career Ladders, the IEA made it clear at the time that our support should not be construed as carte blanche backing of any specific proposal. "I stated over and over again that the devil would be in the details, and unfortunately the details of this proposed rule are not acceptable to our members," said Cyr.

The IEA is very concerned that the proposed rule will make it harder to attract teachers to Idaho and to encourage quality teachers to stay in Idaho. "Teachers, students, schools and communities all stand to pay the price for this ill-advised policy," said Cyr. "This is another example of the bureaucratic meddling that has resulted in many teachers leaving Idaho for opportunities in other states."

Mr. Westerberg also fails to address the consequences (intended or unintended) that the proposed rule may bring about, despite his assertion that a "teacher's certificate could not be lost based on performance." The IEA did address the potential vicious cycle in this opinion piece on our website. <http://idahoea.org/news/idaho-state-board-education-sets-vicious-cycle-teachers/>

There is much more information about Tiered Certification available on the IEA website, <http://idahoea.org/>, and the IEA encourages everyone to learn more and express their viewpoints through the channels made available by the State Board of Education, which include e-mail via Tracie.Bent@osbe.idaho.gov and three public hearings. Those hearings will be October 7 in Pocatello, October 14 in Lewiston and October 21 in Nampa.

Among the IEA's other concerns about this issue are...

- The appropriateness of Mr. Westerberg using his position as a member of the State Board of Education to contact educators directly with a one-sided and incomplete version of events is questionable at best.
- It is disingenuous to say that nearly half of the Career Ladders/Tiered Licensure Committee was made up of teachers and former teachers, when the committee is top heavy with politicians and policy makers. Of the 20 committee members, only one is a current teacher, and most of the former teachers have moved on to administrative or political positions.

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- The possibility of a Career Ladders formula is being used as a “shiny object” to distract attention from the Tiered Certification rule. The truth is that the committee has yet to set up any kind of Career Ladders formula, and the authority for funding Career Ladders resides with the legislature, not the Task Force.
- The evaluation framework in the proposed rule is complex, inconsistent and imprecise. Many districts don’t even use the Danielson Framework, upon which the rule is based.
- The rule opens the door for punitive actions on the part of local administrators, which could lead to a teacher losing their license and career.
- Evaluators may not be properly trained or have sufficient time to do effective and appropriate evaluations.
- This is another attempt on the part of state policy makers to bring back pieces of the Luna Laws, which the voters of Idaho overwhelmingly rejected by defeating Propositions 1, 2 & 3.

For more information or interviews about the Westerberg letter and Tiered Certification, please contact the Idaho Education Associations and/or your local education association.

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