



June 12, 2017

Governor Butch Otter  
State Board of Education Members  
650 West State Street  
Boise, ID 83702

Governor Otter and State Board of Education Members:

The Idaho School Boards Association and the Idaho Education Association are providing the following comments in reference to the process used to adopt the draft of the ESSA plan that is currently before the State Board of Education for their review.

We do want to note that we previously addressed this issue with Superintendent Ybarra in correspondence dated November of 2016. We copied several entities with that correspondence including Matt Freeman and Marilyn Whitney.

Our concerns about the process have not changed since we wrote that first correspondence. In that correspondence we asked the following:

*First, we want to be included in the drafting of the final version of the Plan. We would like all stakeholder groups to come together at a meeting and draft the final language of the Plan. We realize that this may take more than a day and we are all committed to taking the time necessary to complete and finalize this work. Only then do we believe we will have a document that we can all say we participated in drafting and one in which we believe we can all support.*

Unfortunately, we were still never asked to participate in the drafting of the plan.

During a meeting held earlier this spring, the State Department of Education (SDE) did agree to begin working with us as we move forward with the plan. We want to acknowledge the SDE's efforts and express our appreciation. However, asking for comment after the plan is written is not synonymous with including our associations during the drafting of the plan.

As we previously stated, The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) in conjunction with 13 other national partners created a document titled *Let's Get This Conversation Started: Strategies, Tools, Examples and Resources to Help States Engage with Stakeholders to Develop and Implement their ESSA Plans*. That document states, "**SEAs should not engage stakeholders simply out of compliance, structure discussions as a one-way conversation, or seek input long**

**after it can be used to inform decision making.”** Unfortunately, we believe that the SDE disregarded this very important advice from CCSSO as Idaho’s plan was drafted.

Neither of our associations was asked to participate on any of the committees. While some of the individuals serving on various work groups and subcommittees were teachers, administrators, and/or school board members, those individuals may or may not have been members of our associations, and as such, they were not representing the larger stakeholder group. Despite our repeated questions and requests, no one from our associations was placed on the committees.

### **The Plan**

We have reviewed the draft plan and continue to have concerns about some of the content. The SDE is making efforts to provide our members with an opportunity to comment on the plan. However, and once again, commenting on the plan and being included in the drafting of the plan are not synonymous efforts.

### **Conclusion**

We understand that this plan will move forward in some form or another and it is not our intent to delay that submission. In addition, no one can do anything about what has already occurred. With that said, we felt it was important for you to know that we have been discouraged and dismayed that we were not included at the table for the drafting of this plan. We also feel disrespected. We don’t feel the SDE’s process met the spirit or intent of the law.

In the future, we hope that the SDE will reconsider the process they use for working with stakeholder associations.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact Sue or Karen. Thank you for your service to the students of the State of Idaho.

Sincerely,



Karen Echeverria  
Executive Director  
Idaho School Boards Association



Penni L. Cyr  
President  
Idaho Education Association

CC:

Matt Freeman, Idaho State Board of Education  
Marilyn Whitney, Office of the Governor  
Dwight Johnson, Career and Technical Education  
John Watts, Idaho Library Association  
Cheryl Charlton, Idaho Digital Learning Academy  
Rod Gramer, Idaho Business for Education  
Terry Ryan, Idaho Charter School Network  
Beth Oppenheimer, Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children  
Lauren Necochea, Idaho Voices for Children  
Jeri Henley, Idaho Parent Teacher Association