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Re: HB 2612, Requiring school districts to be in compliance with all state laws and rules and regulations to be accredited and requiring the state board of education to establish a process to challenge determinations of such compliance

Position: Opposition Testimony
Date of Hearing: February 5, 2024

To the Honorable Members of the House Committee on K-12 Education Budget,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to House Bill No. 2612, a piece of legislation that, while ostensibly aimed at enhancing accountability within our education system, in practice exacerbates existing inequities between public and private schools. My concern stems not from the focus on accountability, but the principle that such measures be applied equitably across all educational settings that receive public funding.

HB 2612 mandates stringent compliance and accreditation processes for public schools without imposing similar requirements on private schools or homeschool environments. In such an inequitable landscape, public schools are subjected to rigorous scrutiny and penalization for non-compliance, while private institutions operate without parallel oversight. This selective application of accountability standards undermines the foundation of equitable education policy.

The proposed bill arrives at a time when there is a concerted effort to expand voucher programs that redirect public funds to private and homeschooling, without the accompanying accountability measures that one would expect when public funds are at stake. This not only diverts resources away from public schools but also grants private entities a competitive advantage by exempting them from the compliance burdens faced by their public counterparts. The lack of equivalent transparency and accountability for private schools poses a critical concern.

These efforts would collectively and permanently weaken the public school system. By imposing stringent accreditation requirements solely on public schools, we risk stigmatizing and delegitimizing these institutions in the eyes of the public. Such measures could inadvertently pave the way for a reallocation of funds to entities aligned with specific ideological or political agendas, rather than to those committed to providing a universally high standard of education.

I advocate for a system where accountability and improvement measures are uniformly applied across all educational institutions benefiting from public funding. This approach not only ensures fairness but also upholds the principle that all students, regardless of the type of school they attend, deserve access to quality education underpinned by rigorous standards of accountability and transparency.

While I support efforts to improve the accountability and quality of education in our state, such efforts must be equitable and inclusive of all education providers that potentially receive public funds. I urge the legislature to reconsider the provisions of HB 2612 and to work towards legislation that promotes fairness, transparency, and the universal application of accountability standards.

Sincerely,

Jason Anderson