

Lisa Koski

Testimony in Support of HB 4625 – 4628

June 22, 2011

Good Afternoon. My name is Lisa Koski and as a member of StudentsFirst and a resident of Lincoln Park, Michigan, I am here today to urge you to support House Bill 4625, House Bill 4626, House Bill 4627, and House Bill 4628.

These four bills put forth needed reforms for Michigan's public education system by putting the needs of students at the forefront of the conversation. For far too long, we have been standing by a system that protects adult interests at the cost of student achievement. This bill is not about job security or due process. Rather it is about structuring our public education system so that student achievement is the number one objective and so that effective educators are able to thrive in a system that promotes this common goal.

I have taught in a variety of settings- private, traditional public and charter public schools. For the past 8 years I have taught at Trillium Academy, a charter public school in Metro Detroit. Because I have chosen to teach at a charter school, I am not tenured. None of the teachers at my school are tenured. We are held accountable for our students' progress. Because there is no union at my school, ineffective teachers are let go. There is no last in, first out. There are very high standards set for all staff at Trillium. I believe that teachers everywhere will live up to the standards set before them. I am here because the children in our school deserve nothing less than the best. Having a great teacher can ensure a child's success for the rest of their lives.

As I mentioned, we do not have "last in, first out" or LIFO at my school. However, as the system stands now in Michigan, performance is not the main consideration in school layoff policies. Instead, teachers are laid off based on seniority. We cannot let the outdated "last in, first out" policies dictate any of our school districts' layoff practices. Under the current system, our children and students lose some of our best teachers. Right now, you have the ability to change the law so that we protect Michigan's best teachers.

I understand this bill is hard to push through. I believe it is the right thing to do. We must make the hard choices that force us to put our students first, at the forefront of every conversation and every policy decision. House Bill 4625, House Bill 4626, House Bill 4627, and House Bill 4628 are a step in the right direction.

Thank you for your time.