

Jeffery Chick  
MSAD 37  
LD 165

Dear Committee,

My name is Jeff Chick, and I am a science and social studies teacher for grades 4 to 6 at Harrington Elementary School. With nearly 40 years of teaching experience, I am writing this testimonial to express my strong support for the new bill proposed by Representative Will Tuell.

I would like to address three key issues: classroom behavior, the students in these classrooms, and the future of education. These are significant concerns in schools today, particularly given current laws that prevent the suspension of students below grade 5.

Consider the following scenario: In a class of 20 students, the teacher is reading or presenting the lesson for the day. While most students are quiet and engaged, two are talking and not paying attention. When asked to stop and be respectful, they continue talking. If asked to move to a different seat, one of them defiantly responds, "Hell no!" When given an assignment, they tear it into pieces or turn it into a paper airplane. When asked to leave the classroom, they refuse and say to the teacher, "You can't make me!" Even when the principal or a resource teacher comes to intervene, these students continue to disrupt the class and refuse to cooperate, forcing the teacher to sometimes relocate the entire class. A student gets upset and throws a chair or pushes another student, yet still refuses to leave the classroom.

As a result, valuable instruction time is lost, the teacher's energy is depleted, and the classroom atmosphere suffers. Just think about the cumulative time lost over a week, a month, or even a year.

Furthermore, upon reviewing the existing bill, I noticed it focuses primarily on individual students instead of considering the needs of the entire classroom. The disruptive behavior of one or two students detracts from the ability and desire of the other 18 to learn. The proposed new law would allow schools to send home students who refuse to behave, thereby creating a more engaged and focused classroom environment.

Now let's talk about the teachers. A teacher who is beloved by their students, who is energetic, humorous, passionate, and loves their profession, should not have to spend time feeling frustrated, angry, and stressed, wondering, "What can I do?" It is incredibly unfair to those students who are eager to learn and who cherish the positive energy of a dedicated teacher. Such disruptions break the hearts of these committed educators.

Finally, I am genuinely concerned about the future of education. Many teachers are retiring early, and some are leaving the profession altogether. The number of retiring teachers is not being matched by the number of young professionals entering the field. When I first interviewed nearly 40 years ago, there were 400 applicants for a single position. Today, however, we struggle to fill teaching positions, especially in rural areas.

In conclusion, why would anyone want to teach in a classroom plagued by the issues I have described? Without the option to send disruptive students home or suspend them, what can we do? In rural areas, we often lack the support staff and facilities to accommodate these students effectively.

Thank you for your attention to these important issues.