



Opposition to House Bill 4820

Michigan law requires a teacher's job performance, or effectiveness, to serve as the primary factor in determining personnel decisions resulting in the elimination of a position. The purpose of the current law is to allow for the retention of effective teachers and removal of ineffective ones. Changing the law to allow seniority to factor into personnel decisions will only make it easier for ineffective teachers to remain employed.

A teacher's effectiveness is the best in-school predictor of student achievement. It is well documented that teacher quality is not determined by length of service or seniority. Instead, it is determined by the teacher's impact on student growth over time and application of best practices in the classroom. These indicators of teacher effectiveness are measured via an annual evaluation that incorporates data from student assessments and classroom observations. Tying teacher effectiveness, measured by the performance evaluation system, to personnel decisions ensures schools are staffed with educators who are most likely to foster their students' academic success.

Changing the law to permit personnel decisions to be a subject of collective bargaining, and removing the requirement that these decisions be based on teacher effectiveness as measured by the performance evaluation system, will decrease the quality of educators staffing Michigan's public schools. Allowing years of service to factor into personnel decisions may lead to less effective teachers with more seniority being retained over more effective teachers with less seniority. And permitting districts to determine the criteria for making personnel decisions will lead to the implementation across the state of inconsistent policies that place varying degrees of emphasis on teacher quality. Yet teacher quality must be the primary determining factor for these decisions so that schools can ensure every student in Michigan, regardless of their district of residence, has the best chance at a quality education.

Exposing students to high performing teachers is the best way for schools to improve student achievement. With Michigan's students lagging behind the national average in English language arts and math achievement, the state must take measures to staff its schools with high quality teachers that can reverse this trend. These measures should include basing personnel decisions on the teacher's level of effectiveness, as measured by the performance evaluation system, and not on their level of seniority. The students deserve no less.

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