



June 12, 2015

Dear State Representative:

We write to express our support for House Bill 805, which would permit school districts to furlough professional staff for budgetary reasons and eliminate the antiquated, state-mandated practice of furloughing staff on the basis of last-hired, first-fired. As the two statewide organizations that represent more than 4,000 public school building principals and district administrators, those charged with supervising and managing professional personnel employed in our public schools, we believe this reform is much needed and long overdue.

School administrators understand that furloughing teachers and other professional staff mean reduced support and services for students and do so only as a matter of last resort. Current law permits furloughs when there is a substantial decrease in student enrollment in the school district, substantial decline in class or course enrollments, or consolidation of schools. These restrictions force administrators to eliminate entire programs or supports for students such as foreign language instruction or elementary guidance counselors instead of instituting small, across-the-board reductions that will be possible when House Bill 805 becomes law. Pennsylvania is one of just a handful of states that do not permit school districts to adjust their staffing levels based on budgets or available resources.

In addition, the bill will eliminate the antiquated practice of basing decisions about staff to be furloughed solely on the basis of seniority. Instead, employee performance would dictate which staff is to be furloughed. In instances of equal performance, seniority would serve as the determining factor. The bill includes language that protects effective teachers who, due to seniority, are at the highest salary scale from being targeted for furloughs solely on the basis of their salary level.

While the new Educator Effectiveness System that is used to evaluate teachers and other professional school employees, established under Act 82 of 2012, undergoes its initial statewide implementation, our organizations are working closely with the Department of Education to address the issues that have arisen during its implementation. We are confident the issues will be resolved in a satisfactory manner and not be used as justification to further delay action on House Bill 805.

Sincerely,

Paul Healey  
Executive Director  
PA Association of Elementary and  
Secondary School Principals

Jim Buckheit  
Executive Director  
PA Association of School  
Administrators