

Chair Dembrow and members of the Senate Education Committee,

RE: testimony opposing SB 1552

I'll start with a basic question:

“What is school for?”

This seems both a strange and basic thing to ask - particularly of the education committee. But, the answer to this speaks to the divides we are seeing in schools today and to the core of this bill.

Of course schools are for the 3 R's, for learning skills to advance in the world, for intellectual growth. And we have learned more than ever before with Covid that schools are also for child care, for emotional growth and for interaction with peers and adults.

But we often fail to talk about one of the most important functions of public schools in a democracy. Public schools function as the **Public Commons**. They are one of the only common experiences left in our society. We are increasingly caught in our silos - separate from others who might be a bit different from us. While it is imperfect, public schools break down those silos. Kids from all walks of life talk about the ideas they hear, share the information they learn, and recognize their common humanity that cuts across the differences their parents are too aware of. At their best, schools bring not only students, but also their families, together.

At this time, this feels like it isn't working too well. Rifts between different points of view are dominant. But kids still play together on the playground. They still read the same books and discuss what they mean, they learn about the different habits, traditions, and beliefs of their school mates.

To lose this would be tragic.

Thank you for your service,

Carol Greenough, Ph.D.