

Submitter: Gregg Heacock
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Education
Measure: HB4161

I urge you to vote "NO" on HB 4161.

As a retired teacher who believes that public education is the cornerstone of a democratic society, I support many changes that would give students, families, and teachers more agency in determining what would work best in engaging each student in exploring various aspects of a broad curriculum, presenting challenges, raising questions, and allowing discussion that furthers classroom inquiry, rewarding curiosity and perseverance. I understand that many classrooms, schools, and districts struggle to get things right. But, well-funded groups like The Heritage Foundation, which has been sending me emails to sell their agenda for defunding public education, are more interested in advancing the fortunes of those invested in subverting our justice system and democratic institutions and disrupting public schools and public libraries than they are in actually helping children become independent in their thinking. The only benefit to be derived from the political disruption and chaos they promote might be to shake-up current bureaucratic top-down approaches to help students get more right answers on statewide and district paid-for assessments that have deprived students and teachers the personal agency that drives us all to learn more about ourselves and the world we share with others. But, that benefit is offers no justification for stealing public funds from an education system struggling to fulfill their mandate to serve all children equally—that is addressing each child's personal social-emotional-cognitive needs to support their educational growth.

School boards, today, are under attack, their meetings so often disrupted by people who have no children enrolled in their schools. These attacks are designed to frighten districts into limiting public access to board meetings, undermining those seeking to offer meaningful roles for parents and care-takers to work with districts to solve problems they want to address.

As I randomly selected comments submitted to urge support for this bill, I was not surprised to see how many accused school districts of catering to political interests that seek to indoctrinate children rather than support the value of personal inquiry, critical thinking, and creative expression. As a student in the '50s and '60s and a beginning teacher in the '70s and '80s, I was textbooks that provided more indoctrination than exploration, and it didn't serve our students well. Instead, it denied them the value of their own culture and experience. This bill is designed to keep children from thinking beyond past assumptions. As schools struggle to live up to the mandate to serve all children equally, offering each an educational

environment that serves their individual needs, this bill would take away funds needed to support this effort. It would encourage families to give up on helping public schools properly address their children's needs, believing that a more regimented learning environment or a less structured learning environment not subject to account for poor learning outcomes or erratic attendance might serve their children better. But, I know that many districts already offer students such options, but with the public accountability that tax-payers deserve.

Legislators have many bills that would use public funds wisely to increase options for students, families, care-takers, teachers, districts. This is not one of them. This is a sham, a scheme to defund the future our children seek, in order to further the undoing of our democratic institutions and weaken the power of teachers to be allowed a proper role in creating better classroom environments and optional programs to improve the educational experiences available to families and others whose children deserve the positive community experience that public education was created to deliver.

Support what's best for families and our children: vote "No" on HB 4161.

Respectfully submitted by Gregg Heacock