

Testimony to the Senate Education Committee Hearing

on

Act 88 Collective Bargaining and Teacher Strikes

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Teacher strikes remove educational stability that students and taxpayers alike expect. Strikes of this kind disrupt the learning process so much so that time lost is irretrievable. PA Core Standards is the defined curriculum for all of our public schools. This standardization, characterized as rigorous, is tested with PSSAs, Keystones, and the SAT. These tests place considerable demands on students who depend on being taught course material. If we are to use these measures to gauge competency there must be at the very least a consistent opportunity to learn.

The union negotiation model originates mainly from the monopoly teacher unions have on education. This monopoly allows teachers the latitude to negotiate contracts on their terms. They are therefore entitled to what they want and school districts (taxpayers) are required to comply. This motivates the union to control the negotiation process through strikes and prolong the disruption to students education, complicating the time line for seniors, adding to the financial burden of parents and caregivers while affecting revenues for school districts' fragile budgets.

While the primary purpose of K-12 school is education, there is an inherent understanding for parents and families that students have safe place to be supervised for 180 days of the year. Strikes disallow students into schools and in many cases place parents in a precarious place to allow students home to supervise themselves or out into neighborhoods largely unsupervised by the community who haven't staffed parks and even police in the context of children typically being in school.

As a School Director, I have a presumptive obligation to provide for a thorough, complete and relevant K-12 education without coercion while maintaining and expanding the educational environment that that entails. As parents, lawmakers, and grownups we have the presumptive responsibility to provide a consistent opportunity for our children to flourish. Above all, we must provide the guidance to open the possibilities that will take them down the path of personal development through achievement. This can only be done through a consistent and uninterrupted educational process.

Strikes by teacher unions should be eliminated from Act 88. They are counterproductive and are used solely as a means to coerce School Boards. Strikes are definitively not in the public interest. These actions disrupt the educational process and at the same time polarize the community. The negotiation process is grossly distorted by the union advantage of striking which in effect eliminates the middle ground needed for agreement to a successor contract.

I believe the best alternative to binding arbitration is having the taxpayers involved. Negotiations should begin one year before the expiration of the current contract. If an impasse is reached at the end of this time frame twelve members of the community will be selected from a pool of applications for a nine member review committee with three alternates that will decide on the last best offer of both sides and whose decision will be final. This review committee will be under the direction of the Common Pleas Court and selected by attorneys from both sides. This process should take no longer than one month.