



STATE OF WASHINGTON
WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH

PO Box 47990 • Olympia, Washington 98504-7990

February 5, 2009

The Honorable Dave Quall, Chair
Committee on Education
Washington State House of Representatives
Post Office Box 40600
Olympia, Washington 98504-0600

Dear Representative Quall:

I am writing as chair of the Washington State Board of Health to support provisions of House Bill 1632, a bill related to school performance reporting that is scheduled for hearing tomorrow. While I expect the Board would support the concept of requiring schools to include information about health and social and emotional learning in their annual reports to parents and the community, it has not discussed this bill. My comments, therefore, relate to language in section (3) regarding school environmental health standards.

For more than a half century, this Board has established environmental health and safety standards for primary and secondary schools, and it has been working on an update to those rules since 2003. It has agreed on rule language but has postponed final adoption to allow the Legislature to consider cost implications. Some earlier drafts of the proposed rule required that school boards publicly report annually on compliance with these standards. This was a contentious issue. School officials complained that the requirement was burdensome, while parents and employees demanded a public reporting mechanism that did not rely on their vigilance. In the end, the Board removed the language because of questions about whether it had the authority to determine the agendas of school boards.

House Bill 1632 would use an existing reporting channel, reducing the burden on schools while meeting the goal of parents and staff that this information be shared in a proactive manner. It is my understanding and hope that the intent of this bill is to require schools to take measures to communicate with their communities about existing performance measures and reports using an existing framework, and that the bill is not meant to require schools to develop new measures or to track and report new types of data.

Thank you for considering this important public health issue.

Sincerely,

Treuman Katz
Chair

cc: House Committee on Education Members
The Honorable Larry Seaquist, Washington House of Representatives
Washington State Board of Health Members
Ms. Christina Hulet, Governor's Executive Policy Office
Mr. Brian Peyton, Department of Health
Mr. Craig McLaughlin, Washington State Board of Health