

Focus on Funding Public Schools with the School Code Bill Please Reject Troublesome Policy Provisions in HB 178 and SB 227

Soon, the House may vote on HB 178 and SB 227. AFTPA asks you to focus on funding the Commonwealth's public schools and reject troublesome policy provisions contained in both bills.

Both bills add "economic reasons" to the list of causes by which a school board may suspend, or furlough, professional employees. AFT Pennsylvania is opposed to adding this additional option for suspension of teachers and other certified staff. "Economic reasons" is broad and leaves room for numerous interpretations. In addition, "economic reasons" does not mean that there has been a decrease in student enrollment or a decrease in the types of services necessary to provide quality public education. An economic crisis can arise due to closure of factory or retail facility, or an economic crisis can arise from the effects of an Act of the General Assembly.

Both bills set the state's newly-required teacher evaluation system results as the criteria for educator furlough and reinstatement. Requiring school districts to furlough educators based on Act 82 ratings will lead to furlough of our best teachers. Under the current requirements of Act 82, teachers across the Commonwealth are assigned ratings based on the building where they teach and on student performance on state assessments. While many teachers may score proficient or distinguished on the "observation and practice" portion of their evaluation, their job placement in a struggling school only serves to reduce their overall rating, thereby putting them at risk of being furloughed before other teachers who teach in less struggling schools.

AFT Pennsylvania asserts that seniority is the only fair method by which to furlough and reinstate educators. Time in the classroom only improves teaching, not the opposite. In addition, teachers must be certified by the state and continue professional development throughout their careers in order to retain their certification.

Please reject the provisions in HB 178 and SB 227 which allow for "economic furlough" and require Act 82 evaluations to dictate furlough decisions. Thank you for your consideration.