



Testimony to House K-12 Budget Committee  
HB 2143 Procurement of Certain School Items  
February 1, 2017  
Dave Trabert, President

Chairman Campbell and Members of the Committee,

We appreciate this opportunity to present testimony in support of HB 2143, which requires school districts to obtain food, fuel and information technology equipment, services and software from a statewide buying pool to reduce costs.

The creation of such bulk buying opportunities is a good start with much more potential from expanding the items and services to be included. The question is not “what else could be included” but “what cannot be included.” Making provision for school districts to acquire the same or better quality products and services allows the savings to be used to improve outcomes.

I served on the K-12 Student Achievement and Efficiency Commission in 2014 and heard testimony from school officials objecting to being required to make purchases in the manner prescribed in HB 2143. They wanted to be able to spend more to get the same product or service so they could shop locally and support their community. That is a noble desire but the purpose of the school funding formula is provide adequate funding so that every student gets an opportunity to get the education they deserve.

Spending more than necessary to acquire the same quality product or service, regardless of the rationale, is a conscious decision to make less money available for Instruction or to require unnecessary taxation on citizens. And since most school funding comes from citizens outside each district, expecting citizens to pay more than necessary is a form of taxation without representation.

Article 6, Section 6 says the Legislature must make suitable provision for finance of the state’s educational interests but it does not say that schools must be given extra money to operate inefficiently. The authority to appropriate is constitutionally vested solely in the Legislature and in the absence of prohibition on taking efficiency into account, the Legislature may do so. Accordingly, when the Legislature engages in educational matters, it is not eroding local control but exercising its constitutional authority and asking government to make efficient use of taxpayer money.

We fully endorse the concept of HB 2143 and encourage the Committee to do so as well.