



Parents Leading for Educational Equity  
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House Education Committee  
From: Stevent Cleto Garcia  
Re: Testimony in support of House Bill 7726

Chairman McNamara and esteemed Members of the House Education Committee,

My name is Stevent Cleto Garcia, I am a Bilingual Special Projects Coordinator & Designer at Parents Leading for Educational Equity (PLEE). PLEE is a grassroots, family advocacy organization fighting for equitable systems of care for families and children. I am writing to express my strong support for bill 7726 concerning the standards for closure, merger, or phase-out of public school buildings. As a concerned advocate for equitable education I am deeply committed to the vitality and stability of our education system. I firmly believe that this bill represents a crucial stride towards fostering transparency, accountability, and equity in the management of our public schools.

This proposed bill addresses an urgent need for clear and standardized procedures in making significant decisions regarding our educational infrastructure. As evidenced by numerous studies and reports on educational governance, the lack of clear guidelines often leads to confusion, inconsistency, and inequity in the handling of school closures, mergers, or phase-outs. By clearly defining key terms and outlining specific requirements for public school districts and the department of Elementary and Secondary Education, this bill establishes a robust framework that promotes fairness and consistency across our educational landscape.

I commend the bill's steadfast focus on transparency and community engagement in these processes. Research has consistently shown that involving stakeholders in decision-making processes not only enhances the quality of decisions but also builds trust and strengthens community cohesion. Mandating public school districts and education authorities to announce proposals and provide detailed reports to affected stakeholders ensures that parents/caregivers, students, teachers, and the broader community are kept informed and involved throughout the decision-making process. Additionally, the requirement for hosting meetings and forums to gather feedback underscores a genuine commitment to democratic principles and inclusive governance.

Moreover, the bill's provision for contingency transition plans is supported by extensive research highlighting the importance of smooth transitions, particularly for vulnerable populations such as students with disabilities. Studies have shown that well-planned transitions can mitigate the negative effects of school closures, mergers, or phase-outs and promote continuity in students' educational experiences. By adhering to legal frameworks such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education ACT (IDEA) and Section 504 of the U.S. Rehabilitation bill, this bill upholds the rights of all students to equitable access to quality education and support services.

In conclusion, I implore you to lend your full support to this proposed legislative bill. By enacting these standards for the closure, merger, or phase-out of public school buildings, we can build a more transparent, equitable, and responsive education system that serves the needs of all students and communities. Let us seize this opportunity to uphold the values of fairness, accountability, and inclusivity in our education system for the betterment of our society as a whole.

Thank you for your unwavering dedication to the welfare of our educational institutions.

Sincerely,  
Stevent Cleto Garcia  
Bilingual Special Project Coordinator & Designer