

**HB 1507 Paycheck Protection**  
**Testimony of Kristi Lacroix**  
**Association of American Educators Regional Membership Director**  
**Pennsylvania House State Government Committee**  
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My name is Kristi Lacroix and I am former public school teacher of 15 years as well as an active member of the local state and national teachers' union. I would like to thank Chairman Metcalfe, Chairman Cohen and the members of the committee for giving me the opportunity to testify today. I now serve as a Regional Director for the Association of American Educators, otherwise known as AAE. AAE is the largest national, non-union educators' organization with members in all fifty states. I am submitting this testimony in firm support of paycheck protection:

- This law would ensure that teachers and education employees are not paying for political activity they are not aware of or do not support.
- It empowers teachers and other education employees to make financial decisions that best fit their budget and beliefs for any reason.
- It provides teachers and education employees with added protections of understanding how their membership dues are used. It doesn't make sense to utilize a taxpayer-funded payroll deduction service for the purposes of partisan political activity.

We believe it is only logical and fair to allow teachers and other education employees to understand where their union dues are going. As a non-union organization, AAE was established, at least in part, by the fact that teachers were frustrated with their money going to partisan political causes or candidates. This legislation would allow teachers to make conscious decisions about where their hard-earned dollars are going. No educator should fund causes or candidates without their direct consent, period.

The impact of this bill is significant. As part of my position with AAE, I speak with teachers that are unaware that their union dues are going to political activity. The fact that union dues go to more than just benefits and services is not widely known. Under paycheck protection, educators would be empowered with the information to make their own decisions. This legislation promotes fairness and transparency with all organizations.

Furthermore, educators are often provided misinformation or experience intimidation when questioning what their union dues are funding. During my teaching career, I requested the audited budgets from the local, state, and national unions. I was told that this information was either: non-existent, not allowed to be seen by educators, or was something that could only be reviewed if I were to go to the union offices and sit with an official to have the budgets explained to me. It was only after I did the research and threatened a lawsuit that I was given the information. This process took over six months, and required certified letters, deadlines, and numerous mailings each year I completed the requests.

After finally reviewing the budgets, the information was very vague and there was a lot of money going toward organizations that I had never heard of. These organizations were political in nature, but since they did not give directly to political candidates, the union was legally allowed to donate members' dues, without even obtaining the direct consent from members. I continued to demand accountability from the union and was met with hostility, as well as misinformation. This legislation frees school districts and administrators by providing educators with accurate information. Paycheck protection laws also increase fiscal transparency and accountability on the part of associations, both of which are imperative to teacher freedom.

To address some of the arguments of opponents of the initiative, it's been said that this legislation would curb union power. On the contrary, this is not a bill designed to eliminate unions. Rather it provides educators the ability to protect themselves from financially supporting political candidates they otherwise wouldn't support. The unions will be held accountable to members. During my teaching tenure, I was a fair-share member of the union. This meant that I was only required to pay for collective bargaining and administration costs.

According to the audited budgets I acquired, the union claimed that those representation-only costs accounted for 98% of all union dues. However, after reading the audited budgets, the numbers did not add up. Furthermore, after requesting a refund of the liability insurance portion of my dues, I was given \$284.00 in returns the first year, \$422.00 the second year, and \$683.00 the third year. Again, the audited budgets showed that the cost of my NEA liability insurance was just under \$3.50 for the year. The numbers simply did not make sense. The more I inquired about the inaccuracies, the more I was stonewalled. In all, it took me over three years to do my own research and get the truth about where my hard-earned money was being spent by the union. Meanwhile, my district was automatically deducting my dues from my paycheck and there was nothing I could do to stop it; it was part of the employee contract and I simply had to comply.

In Wisconsin, all school employees are given a choice as to whether or not to join the union and it is the union's job to recruit members, collect dues, and certify their union with a yearly vote. This accountability placed upon the unions has given an authentic voice to the professionals who chose to continue their union membership. Education professionals deserve honesty and integrity from any and all associations that represent them, and demanding accountability and transparency from the union is paramount in that quest.

In closing, myself and AAE urge you to vote in favor of Paycheck Protection and show your support for the paychecks of all of Pennsylvania's teachers. Teachers deserve to make informed choices. Thank you.

Kristi Lacroix  
[Kristi@aaeteachers.org](mailto:Kristi@aaeteachers.org)