



## **Pennsylvania House of Representatives Education Committee Public Hearing Testimony on the Revised Rating System for Professional School Employees**

**Presented by**

**The Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators  
October 28, 2019**

Good morning Chairman Sonney, Chairman Roebuck, and distinguished members of the House Education Committee. My name is Dr. Eric Eshbach, Superintendent of the Northern York County School District and Legislative Chair of the Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators (PASA). I am here today representing PASA, whose members include more than 900 school district superintendents, assistant superintendents and other public school system leaders from across Pennsylvania. I appreciate the opportunity to provide comments regarding the proposal to revise the teacher and principal evaluation system as outlined in Senate Bill 751 and House Bill 1897.

PASA is neutral on both of these bills. While we believe the proposed changes to the teacher and principal evaluation system are mostly positive and will create a better evaluation system for professional employees, we have some remaining concerns that prevent us from taking a position of support.

We thank Senator Aument and his staff for their extensive work and sincere effort that went into developing this proposal. The senator's outreach to education stakeholders and willingness to listen to various points of view was exemplary. We thank him and his staff, especially Stephanie Buchanan, for the opportunity to participate in the discussion.

PASA supports the change to greater weighting of the observation component of the teacher evaluation process. The current system's weight of 50% for data often leads to the skewing of the final evaluation, inadvertently preventing unsatisfactory ratings from being issued to poorly performing teachers and distinguished ratings from being issued to high-performing teachers. Allowing 70% of the evaluation to be based on observation and 30% based on data will create a more accurate evaluation for the employee. We also appreciate the change allowing up to 100% of a teacher's or principal's evaluation to be based on observation if no building data is available.

The inclusion of the challenge multiplier to account for the economically disadvantaged factor in student data is a positive addition to the evaluation system. Educational research and literature is replete with findings related to the impact of poverty on academic performance, and PASA welcomes the inclusion of this multiplier.

PASA supports the change that allows a teacher or principal who is rated “unsatisfactory” to be evaluated a second time within the same school year. While we understand that professional employees need time, resources, and support to successfully complete an improvement plan, a supervisor should not have to wait a full calendar year to issue a second evaluation. We recommended this same option for those professional employees rated as “needs improvement” and regret that it will take up to two calendar years to issue an Unsatisfactory Rating to a professional employee who is not meeting the expectations of an improvement plan and continues to underperform.

When a professional employee is issued an improvement plan, there is an obvious lack of performance leading to an unsatisfactory or needs improvement rating. In the vast majority of cases, the professional employee is not aware of their deficiencies or is unable to correct them. PASA is concerned with the inclusion of language that permits underperforming employees to provide documented input for inclusion in their improvement plan. Although language in the bill indicates that input from the employee will not interfere with the employer’s authority to design a plan, we are concerned about possible implications of this language in the arbitration process or court proceedings.

Finally, PASA requested the reinstatement of the “gross deficiency” clause in the evaluation process. Prior to 2012, superintendents had the authority to issue an overall unsatisfactory rating to any professional employee if just one category of the evaluation was marked unsatisfactory. This action was taken when the severity of the poor performance in that one area justified an overall unsatisfactory rating in the professional opinion of the superintendent. This was an effective tool for superintendents that assisted in removing professional employees who should not be working in schools with children. We continue to advocate for the reinstatement of this clause.

In all, PASA believes that the proposed changes to the teacher and principal evaluation system are mostly positive. However, the concerns that we expressed resulted in a neutral position for our organization. We look forward to continuing to work with the legislature and the governor to improve the professional employee evaluation system and appreciate the opportunity to be part of the discussion.

I would be happy to answer your questions.

Thank you.