TO: House Education Committee Members  
FROM: Dr. Paul M. Healey, Executive Director  
PA Principals Association  
RE: HB 1607 and SB 751 – Educator Effectiveness  
DATE: October 23, 2019

Good Morning. My name is Dr. Paul Healey and I am the Executive Director of the PA Principals Association and a former Superintendent of Schools in Adams County. I would like to thank Chairman Sonney and Chairman Roebuck and members of the committee for the opportunity to address you on this very important topic.

Act 82 of 2012 revamped the teacher and principal evaluation systems in Pennsylvania and the field has been implementing the components for the last seven years. While Act 82 did improve on the past evaluation systems, it was soon clear that there were some major flaws with the system which have been studied, discussed, and addressed in the form of white papers, stakeholder meetings, and specific recommendations to improve the system.

On the positive side, the current system employed a model with rubrics to assess teachers and principals in four general categories which account for 50% of their overall total evaluation score. There has been widespread acceptance of this part of the evaluation system in the field which has led to critical conversations between teachers and supervisors about effective instruction, curriculum alignment, utilizing data to inform instruction, student achievement, and accountability to name a few.

However, the current system once implemented, soon revealed some flaws in the evaluation of teachers and principals. For example, each school receives an annual SPP (School Performance Profile) score which accounts for approximately 15% of the evaluation score and includes student achievement and growth measures. However, the SPP score can drastically change or alter one’s overall score and the performance category from distinguished, proficient, needs improvement or failing. An individual who teaches or leads in a school with a lower SPP score is actually prevented from receiving an overall Distinguished rating that they may have indeed earned in that year due to the overall formula calculations. The opposite is also true. An individual who may not be meeting the proficient levels in the four categories has their overall evaluation score elevated if their school has a high SPP score rating.

Our mission is to ensure a quality education for every child by comprehensively supporting the educational leaders of our schools.

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Affiliate of the National Association of Elementary School Principals and the National Association of Secondary School Principals
Serving and Supporting Principals, Assistant Principals and Other Educational Leaders.
What this means is that an ineffective teacher or school leader is sometimes protected from receiving either a Needs Improvement or a Failing rating due to the SPP score. Why is this important? None of us want an ineffective teacher or ineffective school leader in our schools. The research is very clear about the affects of ineffective teachers on students. Bill Sanders formerly out of the University of Tennessee found that a student who has an effective teacher will continue to derive benefits from that instruction for several years while a student who has an ineffective teacher will not demonstrate the same level of growth or achievement as his counterpart. More alarming is the fact that if a student has several ineffective teachers, they may never reach their full potential. No evaluation system should place adults first over the protection of our most precious resource – the children of the Commonwealth of PA.

Over the past few years, the PA Principals Association has been working with Senator Aument and his staff along with my colleagues from the other education associations to discuss a multitude of changes to the current system. We thank Senator Aument and staff in bringing stakeholder groups together to listen to the concerns, discuss some possible solutions, and to draft legislative changes to Act 82.

The PA Principals Association is in support of the proposed changes as we feel they improve the current system. No other group is more impacted by the current system or the changes than school leaders. School principals conduct many teacher evaluations each school year and assess performance based on the criteria. They are involved in all teacher evaluations and complete and submit documentation to the chief school administrator for final signatures. In addition, school leaders are also assessed by their supervisors using the same Act 82 system. Thus, school leaders know and function in the evaluation system as the evaluator and the evaluatee.

How do the proposed changes correct some of the flaws in the current system? The current system assigns a 50% weight to the four general categories of planning and preparation, instruction, classroom environment, and professional responsibilities. The proposed changes would allocate a 70% weight to these same categories thereby shifting more emphasis to things that are under a teacher’s or principal’s control and less on factors outside of their control. We believe this would also reduce the scenarios we previously described whereby the SPP score alters the overall evaluation.

Second, temporary professionals are currently evaluated taking student achievement factors into account in which they were not even involved with in the previous academic year or years. The proposed change would make
their evaluation system be 100% on those factors related to planning and preparation, instruction, classroom environment, and professional responsibilities which is more fair.

Third, the changes more clearly define and expand the teacher specific components to allow for more district utilized assessments as well as taking into account IEP progress and other student performance measures.

Fourth, there was not a clearly defined process for the evaluation of school leaders in Act 82 and the proposed changes outline a standardized process for school districts to follow in the evaluation of school leaders.

In summary, The PA Principals Association feels the proposed changes will strengthen the current teacher and principal evaluation system and we are in support of its passage. Is SB 751 perfect? Absolutely not. We have several ideas for improvement that would make the proposal even better, from our perspective. We are hopeful that we can continue this dialogue and evaluation of Act 82—even after the passage of SB 751—to ensure that we have future opportunities to tackle some additional concerns we have with the existing system.

The field has been waiting for these changes for seven years and it is time to correct some of the known flaws with the system. Thank you for your time and I will be happy to entertain any questions at this time.

Sincerely,

Paul M. Healey, Ph.D.
Executive Director
PA Principals Association