

Testimony on Senate Bill 786-

I was a public school educator for over 30 years. During that time, I valued the partnership I had with parents when teaching their children. The more transparency there was, the better.

It seems that recently, schools and teachers don't want transparency anymore and want to hide what our children are being taught. One thing I have learned is that if someone is trying to hide something, they know they are doing something wrong.

This bill will allow parents to see what their children should be taught in the public school classroom. It will also allow them to see which materials are being used. In one respect, it will allow parents to know how to help children with homework if needed. It will also allow them to understand the broad selection of content being taught to their children.

Some have said that posting this information would require teachers to do more paperwork. While this is laughable considering the fact that government and local districts don't mind giving staff more paperwork to promote and oversee the district's agendas and goals, it is also not true.

Every day that I taught, I had a written plan. The days of "flying by the seat of your pants" in the classroom have been gone for over 25 years. Any teacher who claims to be competent has a written plan for each class, each day. I knew which materials I would need, which internet resources I needed, etc. They were written down to assure I was efficient and effective. If anyone wanted to see them I could send a photocopy or an electronic copy. It was no big deal. Yes, occasionally events would cause me to adjust that plan, but the basic concepts taught and materials used didn't change.

Some have claimed that this would limit the creativity of the teacher to seize the "teachable moment" and go off lesson for a bit. This is also laughable since more "teachable moments" occur in the context of a unit or lesson and don't and shouldn't consume much instructional time. Honestly, teachers who needed to document them could do so in under a minute. There's also nothing wrong with teachers being held accountable to achieve certain lessons in a given time. Our

children only have so many hours and days in school, and based on recent test scores, they need every one of them to be wisely used.

The most specious argument I have heard against this is that teachers are the professionals and should not have to subject their lessons to the judgment of the parents who are not educational “experts.” If there is a teacher out there who believes this, they are in the wrong profession. Truly professional educators understand that the parents have a major role in the education and development of their child. Allowing parents to see what will and is taught in the classroom will only give all the adults in the process an opportunity to work together more efficiently. If a teacher is afraid of having a parent judge a lesson, there is a severe problem.

Finally, we have to remember that a parent’s child is his/her pride and joy. All the hopes of the future reside in that child. Parents want to know that their children have been taught the same principles and beliefs that the parents hold. They also want to know that their child is not being taught to hate this country, other people, or themselves.

And let’s not forget public schools are institutions paid for by the tax paying citizens of this country. In Maryland, this cost is going to triple because of the new “Blueprint.” It’s only right that the citizens should have the ability to see what is going on inside the walls of the schools they pay for. Just like other institutions, they need to be transparent about what they teach our children.