



Community and Schools Together

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CAST DEFENDS PUBLIC EDUCATION, SUPPORTS PROTESTS

For the last five years Community and Schools Together (CAST) has worked hard to assure that students in Madison and around the state have access to excellent educational opportunities . With you, we have been amazed by the events at the Capitol this week. The massive outcry is justified . The radical changes contained in Governor Walker's so-called budget repair bill will harm education and the future of our state.

The bill takes several unnecessary steps, such as limiting a union's ability to collect dues. These steps have no relevance to budget repair, but are instead about damaging union effectiveness.

Making public education work relies on trust and partnership. Despite Wisconsin's strong record on public education and despite all the benefits our communities receive from public education, Gov. Walker has decided to break trust and partnership with WEAC and other unions. In so doing, he has unnecessarily broken the state's relationship with teachers. The outcry has been mobilized by the broad assaults to organized labor, but they are marked most visibly by the many teachers, parents, and students who have provided the core and bulk numbers to the strong protests.

We support the protests and are against the bill. The bill damages our ability as a community to improve our schools. The bill takes an existing, deficient educational policy regarding school funding, leaving caps and constraints on school boards to raise revenues locally, but denies collective bargaining - one of the key measures that was needed to form the original policy. We believe the net effect is extremely damaging to education - destroying a climate of trust and good will that has served as a cornerstone of the collective bargaining process. We may pay less in taxes, but teachers, classrooms and students will suffer.

Quality teachers are essential to quality education, removing their right to bargain collectively demonstrates great disrespect for their contributions and will make it more difficult to attract and retain the quality teachers our children need.

CAST, instead, welcomes reasonable and rational debate on educational funding and policy. We believe that policy should allow collective bargaining, equity, and the opportunity for community involvement to answer critical funding needs schools may have - given the likelihood that the state is unable to fund them appropriately.

CAST also calls for the safety of protesters and for those working to protect public safety at the Capitol. We ask Governor Walker and others responsible for state leadership to open debate, to seek to find rational budget policies that best represent the communities they serve. We look forward to our teachers and students returning to the classrooms, where together they create the foundation for Wisconsin's future.

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