



 Idaho Business Coalition
for Education Excellence

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**IBCEE Testimony by Vince Hannity
House Education Committee
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Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee:

My name is Vince Hannity, president of the Idaho Business Coalition for Education Excellence.

Our organization consists of more than 80 Idaho CEOs, presidents and managing partners. It was officially organized in 2003 and incorporated as a 501c3 nonprofit in 2005. Our purpose is twofold: To facilitate the work of key stakeholders to achieve education improvement, and to advocate on behalf of key education improvement efforts.

IBCEE believes the critically important task of education is to develop students into effective citizens and competent participants in the global economy.

In the future, most new jobs will require highly skilled workers. But there is growing evidence to suggest that Idaho is not doing nearly well enough to prepare our students for those future jobs. To cite one example, Idaho ranks last in the nation in terms of students who complete post-secondary education programs.

That is why, for several years now, IBCEE has encouraged all stakeholders to look at meaningful reform of Idaho's education system. And today, in this climate of increased demands on Idaho's budget, the only way to improve and strengthen our education system is to innovate and eliminate inefficiencies.

IBCEE strongly supports education reform. The *Students Come First* package of education reform proposals is a bold and innovative step toward the reform we think we need. It has been the foundation for active and productive debate.

We understand that specifics of the plan will change, as they already have, and that more ideas to improve the plan will emerge. We will leave to you and education professionals to work out those details.

Broadly, however, we support the major themes of *Students Come First*:

- We support significant investment in technology to bring state-of-the-art classrooms into Idaho schools -- not to replace teachers, but to give them more tools with which to do their job.

- We support a base pay and pay-for-performance plan that incentivizes collaboration among teachers, rewards teachers for high performance and undertaking extra work, and increases teacher compensation.
- We support increased accountability measures throughout our education system -- for teachers, administrators, schools, and districts.

And we favor implementation of all of these in ways that ensure the greatest possible degree of local control.

We understand these changes are not easy. They are painful. Elements of the plan will indeed make more demands on teachers, as well as students, parents, and administrators.

And several elements of the plan are controversial. Debate rages about us. Debate is healthy, and we strongly encourage it. But we also ask all stakeholders to keep the desired end in sight: To have the most effective, efficient education system for Idaho we can get with the resources available.

In our simple math, we have but a few choices.

We can raise taxes to cover the budget shortfall and implement these reforms.

Or, we can dismiss the *Students Come First* plan and leave it to you all to cut away at education spending until the huge budget shortfall is overcome. And beyond that simply maintain the status quo.

Or, we can adopt *Students Come First*, incorporating all the input and changes that have developed over recent weeks.

IBCEE votes for the latter. We support systemic change in Idaho education – change that includes substantial investment in technology, increased teacher compensation, an incentive pay program, and strengthened accountability measures.

And finally, I would add, IBCEE stands ready to join with all stakeholders, to facilitate and assist in any way possible, in implementing what your final legislation mandates.

Thank you.