



March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Dear Chairman Behning & Distinguished Committee Members,

The Paramount Health Data Project (<https://healthdataport.org/>) is an Indiana based non-profit that has been leading the way in leveraging health data in educational settings to improve academic achievement for more than a decade. During the summer of 2022 we reviewed the health data of students across Indiana and existing policy. Based on this analysis we identified two policy priorities as the most prominent health and safety issues facing Indiana students. I published these topics in an August 2022 Indiana Capital Chronicle Commentary Article, "A New Era of School Safety: Closing Loopholes" (<https://indianacapitalchronicle.com/2022/08/02/a-new-era-of-student-safety-closing-loopholes/>). The two topics were: (1) lead contamination in schools; and (2) teacher misconduct. We are pleased many legislators have been tireless advocates for putting Indiana students first in SB 342 and against teacher misconduct. We are here today to vehemently support the passage of SB 342.

The current educator workforce shortage has put schools in a serious bind. School leaders are struggling just to fill positions. Additionally, existing employment laws often protect employees to the detriment of student welfare. Currently, per Indiana law, Indiana schools are allowed to hire and struggle to fire employees with:

1. criminal convictions currently on probation;
2. criminal convictions currently on home detention with ankle monitors;
3. criminal convictions currently serving time in jail on weekends and during vacations;
4. substantiated DCS cases currently listed in the Indiana Department of Child Service's Child Protective Index;
5. grooming behaviors in educational environments;
6. failed background checks for criminal convictions by all Indiana law enforcement agencies
7. non-disclosure agreements;
8. documented patterns of criminal drug and alcohol abuse over multiple years including DUIs and possession of illegal substances;
9. multiple Class A Misdemeanors convictions; and
10. many concerning yet expunged criminal offenses.

It is unlikely that you will hear from education leaders testifying about their specific experiences with employee misconduct. Current employment laws tie their hands and open

their schools up to litigation and administrative complaints if they speak publicly about specific examples in their schools. The key to SB 342 is that employees are REQUIRED to notify their schools of their DCS substantiated cases. This is a huge shift in ownership and accountability. At that point school leadership can make an informed decision on their hiring choices. Indiana schools and students need the protection of SB 342 to ensure they can keep their students and schools safe. More information about this topic can be found in this article, "Keeping Criminals Out of Classrooms" (<https://indianacapitalchronicle.com/2022/09/22/keeping-criminals-out-of-classrooms/>).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Azure DS Angelov". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Azure" being the most prominent.

Azure DS Angelov, Ph.D.  
CEO Paramount Health Data Project