

Submitter: ELIZABETH JENKINS
On Behalf Of: NA
Committee: House Committee On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4079

I write in support of HB 4079 – Safeguarding Students and Families to address school protocol for student and family safety when federal immigration authorities seek to enter school properties or campuses. I am now a retired public-school educator and a retired administrator of childcare and child welfare programs. One of my duties as a teacher was to accompany other teaching staff and very young children during lockdown-laydown drills. It was the work of the adults present to help a roomful of 3–5-year-old Head Start program children remain calm, silent, and in good spirits during these drills. The things that made this possible included the children's sense that everyone present cared for each of them and the unity and shared friendships among the children themselves. Current incursions by federal immigration authorities into school premises threaten this unified, equitable, shared experience of childhood, threatening to fracture not just families, but the sense of community among a whole cohort of children. Our state must show leadership for educators who are on the frontline today by providing clear protocols that will do everything possible to empower teachers and school administrators to respond promptly, honestly, and with confidence in the law to keep students and families safe. Whether it is a fire alarm, a lockdown alarm, or the sudden arrival of uniformed and armed federal authorities, events happen very fast in such crises. Adults trained in clear, effective and legal procedures can care better for the children now, thereby caring better for our future as a society.