

**Indiana State Teachers Association Testimony
Graduation Pathways Panel
December 5, 2017**

Indiana State Teachers Association President Teresa Meredith prepared the following remarks on behalf of the Association's members in response to the Graduation Pathways Panel's proposed recommendations. President Meredith was not called to deliver her verbal testimony, so please consider the following written remarks.

Testimony

As a kindergarten teacher and current ISTA president it's important that educators' voices are heard and considered. So today, I'm going to share feedback we received from teachers across the state on the Panel's proposed recommendation. As I previously shared with Byron, Alecia and PJ McGrew, our chief concerns continue to be centered on the overall process and the actual recommendation itself.

Primarily, I am concerned you are going to vote on a recommendation without having considered the implementation, the logistics or actual consequences of this pathways plan.

The Panel should consider spending more time with teachers, high school guidance counselors and high school administrators to learn what is currently working and discover what areas may need improvement.

We surveyed our members on each proposal requirement and discovered several themes covering all components.

- Teachers strongly believe that **every student should have the opportunity to earn a diploma** – it is unclear whether some of the requirements will pose special challenges for students with developmental disabilities or who are otherwise challenged.
- Teachers are already concerned about,
 - a. **The number of tests students face** and do not support additional standardized tests.
 - b. **Equal access, resources and capacity issues** associated with some of the components, for example the apprenticeship and credential pathways, transportation issues and course offerings.
 - c. **Tracking and reporting of new data** that will be collected and used. In those lines, educators are concerned about moving targets.
 - d. **Students having time within the pathways to change their minds and still graduate on time.**
 - e. **Funding** that will be needed to do this right and to be fair to all.



Educators understand and believe in challenging students and maintaining high expectations. They understand the value of allowing flexibility and local control, but what's missing in this proposal is language tied to embracing and recognizing the value of teachers' professional judgment in determining graduation outcomes.

Now is the time to talk to teachers about what implementation might look like. During those conversations, you just might find that what is being used now is working, and what you may believe to be missing really isn't.

Parents and teachers directly impact students' interest in coursework, college and careers. I urge you to pause and spend a bit more time with the teachers and counselors who are with students daily and learn about what's currently working, and together, determine what tweaks might be necessary. While some adjustments may be needed, we certainly don't need to reinvent the wheel.

