



BRAD LITTLE
GOVERNOR

April 28, 2021

The Honorable Scott Bedke
Speaker of the House
House of Representatives
Statehouse Mail

Dear Mr. Speaker:

I have the honor to advise you that I have signed on April 28, 2021 and am transmitting to the Secretary of State the following House bills to wit:

H 377

within the time prescribed by law, the same having arrived in the Office of the Governor at the hour of 2:20 p.m. on April 27, 2021.

I agree that Idaho public schools and higher education institutions should adhere to the principles of equality, freedom of expression, and respect for all. However, the claim that there is widespread, systemic indoctrination occurring in Idaho classrooms is a serious allegation. Most worryingly, it undermines popular support for public education in Idaho. Our state's public education system is locally driven. Curriculum is determined at the local level. Duly elected boards review and approve these local decisions. They receive input from parents and local educators. If parents or teachers spot an example of instruction that concerns them, they should bring it to the attention of the teacher, principal, superintendent, or school board trustees and root out the problem locally – the closest and most responsive to our students and parents. As state leaders, the last thing we want to do is undermine the trust and local governance of our public schools.

Also, the State Board of Education is provided broad authority for the general supervision and governance of elementary and secondary schools and higher education institutions, both in Article IX, Section 2 of the Idaho Constitution and Section 33-101, Idaho Code. The State Board has taken up the issue of freedom of expression within our Idaho schools, colleges, and universities, and will review its policies and engage in important conversations with a variety of stakeholders on these matters. We must be focused on facts and data, not anecdotes and innuendo.

The past 13 months have presented enormous challenges for students, parents, teachers, and school administrators across Idaho. School leaders and professional educators have performed admirably and have taken extraordinary steps this past year. Many educators have told me the past year has been the most difficult of their entire careers. We cannot take their efforts for granted.

I have been clear that the pandemic must be a short-term disruption to students and schools. We do not want the pandemic to undermine lifetime opportunities for a generation of Idaho students. We need to refocus our efforts on the tremendous tasks ahead – coming out of the pandemic, addressing the challenges associated with learning loss across elementary and secondary education, and preparing our students to be college- and career-ready. We should redouble our efforts on equipping teachers, parents, and schools with the tools they need to help students overcome learning challenges. We should be signaling to teachers that we value their important work, and we want them to remain in Idaho schools.

The process that produced this legislation over the past few weeks sends the wrong message to Idaho teachers, parents, and students. It has been nothing short of a distraction from meeting our constitutional and moral obligations to public education in Idaho. It is time to get back on track.

Finally, I am concerned about the past few weeks creating a precedent for public education budgeting. Unlike state agencies, school districts and public charter schools have tight, statutorily directed budget deadlines. Schools must have their budgets in place at the beginning of the state's fiscal year on July 1. This year's delay of budget-setting has created hardships for schools, distracting school leaders and professional educators from more important, student-centered priorities.

Aside from these concerns, I am hopeful we can emerge stronger and more committed than ever to public education in Idaho.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brad Little', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Brad Little
Governor of Idaho

Cc: Secretary of State