

## Paycheck Protection Legislation (HB 1507)

Testimony of Keith Williams

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PENNSYLVANIA HOUSE STATE GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

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Good morning and thank you for your time and interest in protecting the constitutional rights of Pennsylvania's dedicated educators. Specifically, I would like to thank Chairman Metcalfe, Chairman Cohen and the members of the committee for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Keith Williams, and I have worked in public education for the past 17 years. I am a HS English teacher and resident of the Conewago Valley School District. My wife and I have three children and a foster son in my district, and I have been employed by CVSD for the past 14 years. With the exception of my first year in our district, I have never been a member of the teachers union. Throughout my time at Conewago Valley, I have also served as a cross country coach, Jr. High track and field coach, and member of our school's Student Assistance Program for at-risk youth. For over a decade, I led an innovational outdoor education program that involved teaching American literature & science in the context of such places as the Grand Canyon, Crater Lake, Yellowstone, and Acadia National Parks.

I firmly believe that doing what is right often requires sacrifice and is rarely comfortable. In September of 2001, I proudly served with my search and rescue team in the recovery efforts immediately following the terrorist attacks in New York City, where I spent weeks combing through the debris to find personal effects and remains. Standing up for what is right, standing up in the face of powerful forces, criticism, or threats is the only way I can ever hope to make a difference, and that is why I stand before you today as a Pennsylvania public school teacher in full support of paycheck protection.

This legislation is important to all education employees and is necessary to protect union members and fee payers. HB 1507 promotes transparency and will ensure that teachers are not paying for political activity they do not support. While the PSEA claims to support my local interests, it also donates millions to political candidates and causes well beyond the borders of my district and county, and in many cases, outside the Commonwealth. As fee-payers and taxpayers, teachers have a right to know where and how their money is politically allocated.

For more than the 14 years I have been employed there and until several months ago, Conewago Valley was an "open shop" district. In March of 2013, the union membership in Conewago Valley voted to become "closed-shop" and collected over \$20,000 from the earnings of myself and 45 of my non-union colleagues using taxpayer resources. The same district office, staff, and accounting system supported with taxpayer money is used by a political lobbying group to collect tens of thousands of dollars just in our district alone. If money is being siphoned from the earnings of educators and disseminated to lobbyists, *both* fee payers and union members have a right to determine how the state and national unions allocate our individual earnings.

Again, as both a taxpayer and teacher, I'm particularly concerned about this use of taxpayer resources serving as a collection tool for political purposes. HB 1507 removes the burden from the district for unfairly utilizing taxpayer-funded payroll services for the purposes of partisan political activity. What other political lobbyists have the ability to collect millions of dollars using the same staff and resources my property taxes currently support? I can think of no other group, and the only individuals I can recall who have co-mingled taxpayer resources with their political campaigning have received prison time.

As both a teacher and homeowner in my school district, I call on you to end this abuse of taxpayer resources for the purpose of collecting on behalf of political lobbyists. Understand that HB 1507 does not weaken unions. Instead, it asks only that they function within the same parameters as any other political group.

I would like to again thank Chairman Metcalfe, Chairman Cohen and the members of the committee for the opportunity to testify, and I welcome any questions.