

Remarks by Ray Feuss

Public Hearing on House File 80

January 26, 2015

Good evening. Thank you honorable members of the Iowa House of Representatives for this opportunity to speak before you tonight. My name is Ray Feuss and I am a fourth grade teacher at Kenwood Elementary in Cedar Rapids. I have been in the classroom for more than 14 years and due to budget cuts over the last few years, my class sizes have been between 25 to 28 students. During the 2011-12 school year, I had 35 fourth graders in my classroom.

I'd like you all to imagine 35 fourth graders in a classroom. We are all packed like sardines in this hearing room tonight. Imagine that this is what it feels like in a classroom with 35 students only we are together, every single day, trying to learn. I ask you, is this a good environment?

By now you have heard that due to the years of budget cuts most of us working in classrooms purchase the Kleenexes, hand sanitizers, colored markers, paper, folders, pens and other supplies that keep our classrooms organized. We bring food in to store in our bottom drawers for the kids that are hungry, and we purchase the incentive prizes for our classrooms to make sure our students know they are valued. Sometimes I wonder if you have heard us give you this litany so much that you take it for granted.

I'd like you to go on an imaginary journey with me for a moment. What if when you came to the Capitol for work someone told you to bring your own paper for the copiers, pens for your desks and folders for the bills you work on? That person also says you need to bring the notebooks for your committee hearings, and enough tissue boxes and hand sanitizer to keep the

entire chamber supplied for the year. Would you find it odd to need to purchase the supplies you use to do your job because the state decided they were going to cut your budget? How about if the state said, we want you to continue to do your committee work; hold hearings; pass bills, but you need to do all of that without your clerk, your committee staff, and the many pages. The bureaucrats tell you the computers will not be updated, but your resources such as your Iowa Code Books are at least a decade old. If you ask for a raise, someone is going to tell you to “Do more with less” – but they will also tell you that your job is a top priority in the state and they want you to make sure you get things done as quickly as possible. Would you be able to do your jobs to the best of your ability? Would your constituents suffer due to the lack of proper resources at your disposal? It is really quite simple. All we are asking are the proper resources to do our jobs well.

If education is a priority for Iowa’s elected officials they will fund our schools, our students, and our education professionals adequately so that our schools, our students and our education professionals are not short changed.

We are asking for 6 percent Supplemental State Aid. I am an education professional and I know from my professional experience in the classroom that this is what we need so that our kids are not shortchanged.

Thank you.