

**TESTIMONY ON SB 23 – Sen. Lynda Moss  
Senate Education and Cultural Resources  
January 8, 2007**

Chairman Ryan and members of the committee:

For the record, I am Pete Carparelli, Executive Director of the Montana Quality Education Coalition. I live and work in Helena, MT.

**I appear as a proponent of SB 23 sponsored by Senator Moss.**

As you know, Montana Quality Education Coalition seeks adequate stable on-going funding for public K–12 education as defined in 20-9-309 MCA passed by the Montana Legislature in 2005. Passage of SB 23 that is before you today will be one very practical step forward to that goal. It is also good policy.

It is good policy because it builds on good policy – that which was recognized in 2005 when the definition of a basic system of free quality public elementary and secondary schools was defined, and when the Quality Educator entitlement was introduced and passed in accord with that definition and in response to the need to retain and recruit quality professionals to serve our children.

It is good policy because it applies that quality payment to two groups of professionals that were left out of consideration in 2005, two groups of professionals that require licensure and extensive education to provide services to the children of the state. Social workers and psychologists help implement programs for some of our neediest children at risk, while they support the efforts of classroom teachers and school counselors in serving all of our children at one time or another. The number of social workers and psychologists is rather limited even as the need for their services seems to increase. Applying the quality educator payment to those who serve our schools may help recruit and retain such specialists as school professionals in our state.

I also believe that passage of SB 23 would be good policy in that it continues to demonstrate, even in this small increment, the Legislature's intent to fund schools based on the actual cost of providing programs and services. While passing this bill would not provide a huge infusion of dollars, it would continue the practical sensibility of the quality educator entitlement, and could be seen as recognition of the Legislature's constitutional and statutory obligations and as one incremental action to meet those obligations.

Chairman Ryan and members of the committee, I suggest to you that SB 23 is good law and good public policy as it promotes the Legislature's intent to support quality public K-12 education.

Thank you for the opportunity to address you this afternoon. Thank you, Senator Moss for bringing SB 23 to the Legislature.