

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, for the record I am Jule Walker, Superintendent for Plevna Schools. I support Senate Bills 69 and 70.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION/COMPETTIVE SALARIES

It is becoming increasingly more difficult to fill positions – in positions where we received 10 applications, we are now receiving 2-3. Districts are becoming creative in their search for employees. Some have gone to four-day weeks or they may be conducting nationwide searches through the internet – hiring teachers who want to experience Montana, but only making it through part of the year because Wal-Mart is not just around the corner or we really don't make up stories about 20 or 30 below zero weather!

AND for those who make it to the end of the year they are questioned about how they survived their first year of teaching in Montana. This however, is not about what is happening in the classroom, BUT how he/she has survived financially. A beginning teacher who makes \$25,000 with minimal benefits will struggle to meet their financial obligations. We are in an educational crisis. We need our brightest and best college graduates wanting to become educators and to remain in our great state!!!

Recruitment, retention of staff, and competitive salaries are important to education in this state. Senate Bills 69 and 70 address these concerns and on behalf of students throughout the state, I urge you to consider the increase in the quality educator payments and to make the CPI adjustments for all funding elements.

Thank you for your time.