

Final Draft: Board Testimony—Jack Whelan

My name is Jack Whelan. I was one of the plaintiffs in the suit brought against the district regarding this Creative Approach MOU.

In principle, I am a supporter of the Creative Approach Schools. But the framework for allowing them has to be very carefully thought out. The MOU voted on in February did not provide such a framework, and neither does the one before you today. I urge you to vote NO on the amended MOU, and I urge you instead to develop a solid framework in the context of the upcoming CBA negotiations.

I'm not going to go into detail about the problems you already know about: You know that this MOU will have a significant impact on families for whom there are no adequate safeguards. You know that the no-limits application process is likely to have a destabilizing effect on the neighborhood schools. And I'm not going to get into why this amended MOU, if passed tonight, isn't going back to the teachers for a revote.

But here's my chief concern: Unnecessary haste.

It's clear that this MOU has way too many problems and is very vulnerable to abuse.

It's clear that the current framework provided by this MOU has a huge potential for unforeseen and unintended consequences.

It's clear that this sense of urgency is exaggerated if not manufactured.

It's clear that a more thoughtful, conservative approach should be adopted before going forward with a policy that can have such far-reaching consequences.

And yet this vote tonight, like the vote in February, despite the known problems, is being rushed through again. Why? What's the rush? Why not get this right?

I've heard there are "good reasons" why this MOU needs to be passed now despite its flaws. But there are always "good reasons" to do the wrong thing. A savvy leader knows when the reasons are sound or when the reasons are nothing more than putting lipstick on the proverbial pig.

I've been reassured that some of these problems will be fixed later. I accept your good intentions, but excuse my skepticism. The history of this school district for the last decade is paved with unfulfilled good intentions and littered with broken promises.

If there are "good reasons" for not fixing it now, there will be "good reasons" for not fixing it later. If there are not the votes to fix it now, we have every reason to believe they won't be there later either.

Vote NO. And take the time to do it right.