

Dear Senator Weinstein:

I hope that you will be reviewing the material I have submitted to the Senate Education Committee regarding the achievement gap growing between White, African American, Hispanic and American Indian students, and the information relating to the current design of the WASL. It is important that you and other legal experts throughout the legislature understand the underlying principles of the WASL and its related education reform. It is my understanding that you represent a more affluent community of citizens, therefore your interest in the academic achievement gap may not be your priority, however, your decision making power will affect our students of color and our students with disabilities. Aside from your decision making power, your knowledge of the law will influence others in their decision-making.

America is known for practicing racism, especially when creating laws and policies. When I bring information to the Senate education committee and speak to the committee in public testimony, I expect to be given the same amount of time to testify as provided other witnesses, including invited witnesses. When I was testifying at the Senate hearing on January 19, 2006, I noticed you nudging Senator McAuliffe to stop me from speaking. I understand that someone must monitor the time, but when the witness who was on the phone testified she was allowed to speak for 10 or more minutes. I did not notice you nudging Senator McAuliffe to inform the witness on the telephone that she had passed the two-minute timeline. Several other witnesses spoke over the two-minute timeline and not stopped until minutes after the two-minute timeline.

Just because you and other members of the Senate education committee wish to avoid hearing the truth about the WASL design and the impact on our children does not mean you can or should treat me unfairly. The individual on the telephone did not travel to attend the hearing, as I did and many other public members. I came prepared with handouts for the committee and prepared a statement for your benefit. Instead of honoring my work and commitment to ensure you are educated on the facts about the education reform, you insult me as a citizen by allowing an individual who is not present at the hearing to speak well over the timeline. Perhaps if I had called from my home, I would have been given 10 or more minutes to speak to the Senate and help the committee make educated decisions that are effective in resolving a very serious problem. This problem is the implementation of laws promoting discrimination and racism throughout our public schools.

I am a wife and mother of two children, my youngest son is deaf and blind. The State of Washington, under the leadership of Dr. Terry Bergeson, has designed an alternate assessment to test my son who is deaf and blind. One of the criteria for meeting the science standard is for my son to predict his own seizures. This is one example, of many, that I believe is unreasonable and unfair of the State to expect of children with severe disabilities.

I am sure that you have in the 41st district children with disabilities. The achievement gap between children with disabilities and non-disabled peers is growing each year to be currently at 55%.

In the future, I wish to be given equal time to speak and to be given the time to comment on all Bills presented for public hearing. I was not given the opportunity to publicly testify for Senate Bill 6620 or Senate Bill 6618.

You may contact me at 253-444-8734 with questions or concerns.

Sincerely,
Nancy Vernon

Dear Tom Hoeman,

Please be advised of my letter to Senator Weinstein regarding the Senate Education Committee hearing on January 19, 2006. I am forwarding this email to Senator McAuliffe and Senator Rasmussen. I do not believe Senate Bill 6620 was given a proper hearing to allow for public testimony. I am asking that the Senate Education committee hold a public hearing for SB 6620 to allow for public testimony.

I believed it necessary to address the committee hearing with Senator Weinstein because I observed him nudging Senator McAuliffe when monitoring the testimonies. My testimony for Senate Bill 6461 was not in favor of maintaining the WASL. I shared my concerns regarding the validity of the test. In doing so, I do not believe I was treated fairly and given the same opportunities to testify as other witnesses were given, especially those in favor of the Bill and the WASL.