



March 29th, 2023

The Honorable Sen. Jon Lundberg
Chair, Senate Education Committee

RE: Opposition to SB1141

As a coalition of teachers, parents, students, education leaders, librarians, and community members of diverse backgrounds from across all three Grand Divisions in the State of Tennessee, we are writing to express our opposition for SB1141, which will be considered by the Senate Education Committee today, March 29th.

This bill would allow any resident within a public school zone to file a complaint under Tennessee's Public Chapter 493, which restricts teachers from discussing 14 prohibited concepts. Under current enforcement rules created by the TN Department of Education (TDOE), only parents, students, or employees within a public school district or charter school can file complaints involving their school. Through this existing complaint process, there are already significant penalties in place for teachers and districts, including threatening educators' licenses and potential loss of state funds for a district.

Expanding the current complaints process to include *any resident* of the school district served by an LEA is unnecessary when there is already a process in place for Public Chapter 493. According to Section 1, Subsection (1)(d) of the bill, a resident can file a complaint if they have "actual or constructive knowledge" of the violation. However, this language is vague and creates an unclear open-ended complaint process. As a result, the likelihood for wrongful accusations to be submitted will inevitably increase because the bill implies that the person filing the complaint does not have to have direct contact with the teacher or school in question. With severe penalties, including the risk of losing licensure, allowing any resident to file complaints against schools is harmful overreach, creates unnecessary and burdensome administrative tasks, and fosters a culture of distrust toward our teachers.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing teacher shortages, which is reflected in our ongoing struggles to attract and retain staff. According to the Tennessee State Board of Education, in the 2021-2022 school year, there were 1024 teacher vacancies throughout the state. Increasing mechanisms to penalize and intimidate teachers only serves to deepen challenging work environments by undermining Tennessean's confidence in their integrity and intentions. Moreover, this bill would increase the workload of school staff trying to investigate the heightened number of complaints by individuals who are not connected to their schools. With these additional burdens, there is the potential for the loss of critical funding for LEAs.

Overall, allowing any resident outside of our schools to submit violations against individual educators is clear legislative overreach and hinders the local control of our schools. This bill has a dangerous impact by threatening the well-being of our educators and consequently, their ability to help our students thrive. We stand in strong opposition to SB1141, and hope that you will make a choice to respect the integrity of Tennessee's educators and protect our school communities.

Sincerely,

The undersigned advocates of the [TN Coalition for Truth in Our Classrooms](#) network

cc: *Members, Senate Education Committee*



Meili Powell

Advocacy & Partnerships Manager
The Education Trust TN
Davidson County

Cardell Orrin

Executive Director
Stand for Children Tennessee
Shelby County

Kelli Nowers

Parent and non-profit executive
AWAKE
Davidson County

Dr. Diarese George

Executive Director
Tennessee Educators of Color Alliance
Montgomery County

Revida Rahman

Advocate
One WillCo
Williamson County

Joseph Gutierrez

Community Organizer
API Middle Tennessee
Middle Tennessee/Davidson County

Angela Favaloro

Parent
Hamilton County

Ashford Hughes Sr.

Literacy Advocate
My Brother's Keeper Nashville
Davidson County

Xan Lasko

Teacher
Tennessee Library Ecosystem Coalition
Rutherford County

Brooke Allen

Special Educator, Parent
Diverse Learners Cooperative
Davidson Tennessee Library Ecosystem
Coalition

Sabina Mohyuddin

Advocate
American Muslim Advisory Council
Davidson County

Salina Shamsuddin

Student, Activist
Tennessee Youth Coalition
Shelby County

Evelyn Hunter

Parent and librarian
Hamilton County

Emilie Allen

Substitute, UT student
Knox Co. Schools
Knox County

Briana Ramsey-Tyler

High School Access Coach
Davidson County

Candy Johnson

Advocate, Parent
Urban League of Greater Chattanooga
Hamilton County

Lydia Ethridge

EL Teacher
MNPS
Davidson County

Rene Dillard

Advocate
TN Educator of Color Alliance
Davidson County

Moms for Social Justice

Advocates & Parents
Hamilton County

Salwa Daouk

Student
Davidson County

Robin Brice

Teacher
Leadership for Educational Equity
Shelby County

Milana Kumar

Student, Activist
Tennessee Youth Coalition
Shelby County

Camie Ayash

School Administrator
MNPS
Davidson County

Denise Galben

Resident
Montgomery County

Nora Vines

Parent
Knox County



Krista L. Grace

Librarian
Gibson County Special School District
Gibson County

Kelly Messerly

Teacher, Parent
Rutherford County

Bethany Daniel

PhD Student
Davidson
Vanderbilt University

Kristin Labs

Parent, Educator
Hamilton County

Dr. Elizabeth Krogman

Advocate
MNPS
Davidson County

Judith Saks

Advocate
Nashville Jewish Social Justice Roundtable
Davidson County

Stephanie Baker

Teacher, Adult
Davidson County

Mary K. Friskics-Warren

Grandparent
Davidson County

Laura Kleman

Librarian
Williamson County Schools
Williamson County

Sandra Smith

Grandmother
Davidson County

Tallitha Job

Teacher/ Curriculum Specialist
Norris County

Liza Ramage

Advocate, Grandmother
NOAH
Davidson County

Meagan Smart

Educator
Davidson County

Krista Cooper

Parent
Williamson County

Erika Long

Librarian, Advocate
Davidson County

Anastasia Parrish

9th Grade Math Teacher
Rutherford County

Lucie Rhoads

Educator
MNPS
Davidson County

Stella Jasmin Margaret

ELA Teacher
Lenoir City Schools
Knox County

Melissa Spradlin

Nonprofit Executive Director
WCS/FSSD/MNPS
Williamson (home) and Davidson (work)

Ximena

Sped Teacher k-2
Knox County Schools
Knox County

Sheryl M Andrews

Asst Principal
KCEA
Knox County

Margaret

Concerned Citizen
Davidson County

Teneice Kirby

Special Education Educator
MNPS
Davidson County

Susan Carr

Advocate, Parent, Teacher
Franklin County
Franklin County

Emily Squires

School Librarian
GMSD
Shelby County

MaKenzie Graham

Advocate
Stand for Children
Shelby County



Ashlee Hubbard-Heitz

High School Teacher, Parent
Hamilton County Schools
Hamilton County

Kenya Payne

Advocate
Davidson County

Mavis Foster

Literacy Coach
Knox County

Dr. June Murry

Advocate
NAACP
Madison

Marjorie Vaulx

Advocate
NAACP
Haywood County