**RSAI CALL TO ACTION**

**HF 868 Accreditation Overall Amendment**

**May 14, 2021**

As most of you are aware, an amendment to [HF 868,](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=89&ba=HF868) (Division III pp. 28-37) sponsored by Rep. Brink, was approved last week in the House. It essentially rewrites accreditation law for public and non-public schools. It was approved by the House at around midnight on May 6. The House leadership has since indicated they consider this to be a priority item, meaning it must be settled before they will adjourn.

There are numerous issues with this amendment. See the May 14 RSAI weekly report for all of the details. The main content issues are:

* Expansion of scope of accreditation from educational standards to include fiscal, state and federal (IDEA, ESEA, Civil Rights) laws, regulations and rules and reframing accreditation to be compliance driven rather than student-achievement driven.
* An extremely low public hearing petition trigger (5% of voters from last school election) (in opposition to curriculum or any other issue) and no language to stop continuous public hearings on issues already discussed in a prior public hearing.
* A requirement that the DE Director withhold funds for non-compliance at both the Phase I and Phase II levels.
* First Amendment training for any equity coordinator (most of you do not have this as a separate position but whoever is named will have to be trained).

You also need to know that this amendment had essentially no input from the education community. It is our understanding that the Iowa Department of Education was asked some code questions, but that was their only input. There was no subcommittee or committee meeting, and to our knowledge, and no open discussion about the amendment.

**Advocacy Actions: Call or write your Senator.** Express your concerns using the talking points above. **Also contact your Representatives** and help them understand what they approved in the House.

**Contact Information:**

The following links will help you find contact information such as email address and often home or cell phone numbers, so you can easily connect with your legislators.

Find your Senator’s contact information here: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislators/senate>

Find your Representative’s contact information here: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislators/house>

If you don’t know who your Legislators are, find out by selecting your school district, through the interactive map, or by entering an address here: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislators/find>

To call and leave a message at the Statehouse, the Senate switchboard operator number is 515.281.3371 and the House switchboard operator number is 515.281-3221. You can ask if they are available, leave a message for them to call you back, or just leave a short message such as “remove Division III from HF 868 Education Appropriations dealing with accreditation, penalties, fees, public hearings and first amendment training.” (Legislators are typically back home over the weekend).