



# NEWS RELEASE

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**Senator Kimberly A. Lightford**, Assistant Majority Leader

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**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

**Mike Hoffmann:** (217) 782-3272

[mhoffmann@senatedem.ilga.gov](mailto:mhoffmann@senatedem.ilga.gov)

**Rikeesha Phelon:** (217) 782-0577

[rphelon@senatedem.ilga.gov](mailto:rphelon@senatedem.ilga.gov)

## **LIGHTFORD UNVEILS COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION REFORM PACKAGE**

*Performance, Accountability & Fairness are Priorities*

**SPRINGFIELD, Illinois** - Flanked by organizational leaders who represent school personnel, teachers, administrators, parents and school reform advocates, Assistant Senate Majority Leader Kimberly A. Lightford (D-Maywood) today unveiled a comprehensive education reform package aimed at improving performance and accountability for Illinois school professionals and the students they teach.

"We have come together today to endorse an initiative that puts a priority on performance and accountability to ensure the best educational outcomes for Illinois students," Lightford said. "This is the result of all sides – reformers, unions and administrators - coming together to find workable solutions to long disputed issues."

Some of the major changes under Lightford's legislation are provisions that make it harder for teachers to strike, put a priority on teacher performance instead of seniority when it comes to layoffs, increase the performance standards for educators who seek to attain tenure and streamline the system to ensure that unsatisfactory instructors can more easily be removed from their jobs.

Among the biggest hurdles that Lightford had to negotiate was the demand of some to eliminate unions' abilities to strike with the line-in-the-sand demands of union leaders to maintain the seldom used right. After intense negotiation sessions, Lightford achieved a compromise that allows for more transparency and increased requirements before unions can go on strike.

For Chicago, where many have demanded longer school days and an increased school calendar, union officials agreed to a provision that allows school officials to make those changes, but requires the impact on teachers to be bargained. This means that an increase in classroom instruction could be imposed, but some compensation would have to be discussed in contract negotiations. In addition, to strike, the union would have to earn approval of three-fourths of all members instead of the current simple majority.

“Discussing strike was a tense and often uncomfortable process for everyone,” Lightford said. “But I believe that both sides of the issue were surprised to learn how reasonable the others were when we began to drill into the details of strike reform. I am very proud of everyone for being so professional and respectful on such an emotional issue.”

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