

Hello MSCA Members!

We've received a few questions and we wanted to make sure to address them as well as provide a letter or a script to make it easier to ask stakeholders to send in their support as well.

**Question:** "I provided a public comment last spring, do I need to provide it again?"

**Answer:** YES! Last Spring, we asked members to provide public comment to the Chapter 55 Negotiated Rulemaking Committee. They received over 600 pages of public comment and unfortunately were still not able to come to consensus to keep the ratio. Chapter 55 was delivered to the Board of Public Education with OPI's recommendation to remove the ratio. The Board of Public Ed is now reviewing the suggested edits, so essentially, yes, please submit. You can submit that same letter or add to it.

**Question:** "Can you provide us with a template to use for reaching out to parents and other stakeholders?"

**Answer:** We have created a brief template for you to use to reach out to stakeholders to ask them to provide public comment. It is attached to this email.

**Question:** "Can we get more details about the Public Hearing on October 31st?"

**Answer:** The Public Hearing on October 31st is scheduled from 9-12 in the Capitol room 152. If you can, please attend in person to provide public comment.

**Question:** "How do I provide public comment virtually on October 31st?"

**Answer:** Please only join the Zoom link (see below) if you wish to provide public comment virtually. If you are not planning to provide public comment but would like to watch, you can view it on the MPAN streaming site: [Montana Legislature \(sliq.net\)](http://Montana Legislature (sliq.net))

### **October 31st Public Hearing Zoom Link**

#### **To Join Via Computer:**

[https://mt-gov.zoom.us/j/89395931094?pwd=UVNLMVNLK1lac2xjVzdOaEJFa2Nwdz09\[mt-gov.zoom.us\]](https://mt-gov.zoom.us/j/89395931094?pwd=UVNLMVNLK1lac2xjVzdOaEJFa2Nwdz09[mt-gov.zoom.us])

**Click:** 'Join from browser' or 'download the desktop application'

**Enter:** Email and Name (*This will help us identify you*)

*If applicable:*

**Select raise hand** located on the lower menu bar.

After a moment a prompt will appear.

**Click:** "Join as Panelist"

#### **To Join Via Phone:**

**Dial:** 1 (646) 558 8656

**Meeting number:** 893 9593 1094

**Press:** #

**Enter Password:** 406

**Press:** #

*If applicable:*

**Dial:** \*9 to raise hand (*Staff will make you a panelist of the meeting*)

**Dial:** \*6 to mute/unmute

The information below outlines the timeline and doesn't include any additional information (this was the same information sent out in our last update). If you have any additional questions, please reach out to any of the MSCA Board.

Here is the timeline for Chapter 55 Public Comment:

October 7- Public comment begins

The Board of Public Education will begin taking public comment via email starting October 7th.

We have three asks for all of our members:

1. Provide public comment to the Board of Public Education asking them to retain the School Counselor to Student ratio in 10.55.710
2. Please ask School Counselors who are not MSCA members to provide public comment
3. Reach out to supportive stakeholders (parents, students, administrators, community members) and ask them to provide public comment

Written public comment can be sent to [bpe@mt.gov](mailto:bpe@mt.gov)

Here are MSCA's suggestions for providing public comment:

- Keep your talking points clear and concise. Make sure to state that you are in support of keeping the school counselor to student ratio
- It's ok to provide a few talking points, less may be more. If you're not sure what to write, you could simply send a statement asking them to retain the School Counselor to Student ratio
- Professional and polite messages are received better
- Provide examples as to why the ratio is important. Share your experiences within your school (maintain confidentiality), about your program, the multiple hats that you wear, any changes you have experienced over recent years, data that supports increased student needs, etc
- We acknowledge that there is a shortage of school counselors in Montana. Eliminating the ratio will not solve the shortage of school counselors, but could exacerbate the shortage, especially when tough budget decisions need to be made

- Students could miss out on the proactive and responsive services our communities have come to expect from us including A) attendance and graduation rates, B) school climate and bullying prevention, C) social and emotional learning, and D) students having a professionally trained safe person to talk with

Feel free to reach out to any member of the MSCA board if you have questions.

#### October 31- Public hearing

The October 31st Public hearing is being held for citizens who wish to provide their public comment in person. MSCA plans to have some board members attend on the 31st.

You can attend this meeting and provide comment via Zoom. If you want to attend via Zoom, please email [bpe@mt.gov](mailto:bpe@mt.gov).

If you are able to attend in person and/or know of stakeholders who can attend, please do and let us know that you're planning to attend [here](#). I will be in Helena that day with MCPS school counselors and would love to see more school counselors there if you can make it.

#### November 4- Public comment ends

The full timeline and other information can be found here: <https://bpe.mt.gov/Board of Public Education Guideline for Verbal Public Comment>