Good Morning Madame Chair and Members of the Committee:

My name is Hope Morales, and I am a teacher from Roswell. Thank you for hearing my testimony. I am here today to offer recommendations that I believe will provide a more balanced evaluation system for teachers which will also contribute to a more positive working environment while continuing to evaluate teacher’s effectiveness using a variety of components. The recommendations are derived from data collected in a survey of over 1,000 teachers across New Mexico, poring over examples of teacher evaluation systems across the country together with fellow teacher leaders, and reflecting on our experience with the current evaluation system.

The current teacher evaluation system is at the center of many conversations for many reasons, including a lack of shared understanding and lack of support for some of the components of the system. We believe that the evaluation system is necessary, and like all policy, needs to be improved with input from those who implement, not scrapped after a few years.

Survey data indicated that two areas in particular were not supported in the current form by teachers across the state. Teachers overwhelmingly feel that three absences before penalty is not reasonable and needs to be increased. Teachers also believe that student achievement data should not be valued at 50% of their evaluation, making student achievement the highest valued component of the evaluation. Through many conversations we were also able to identify that teachers were not always given an informal walkthrough with an opportunity for feedback before their formal observation, which means they are not being supported to enhance their strategies and skills before they are formally evaluated.

Our recommendations are to:

* Increase the number of absences before penalty to six days
* Decrease student achievement from 50% to 35% and to remove the other levels for student achievement so that the system is simplified and equitable for all teachers no matter the number of years of student achievement data attached to them
* Require that observers conduct a minimum of one informal walkthrough/feedback prior to a formal observation and at least one walkthrough/feedback session each quarter.

The culture in education cannot be ignored. Discussions need to be had, ideas shared, and compromises made to strengthen the educational environment. I have collaborated with teachers from around NM in my fellowship to begin the conversation, share ideas, and make compromises. We surveyed over 1,000 teachers in NM in order to obtain data to begin these conversations. It is our goal that policy bills that will enhance the system do not only pass through committees, but can also supported by both parties and eventually signed by the Governor in order for the recommendations to become more than just an idea and something that could actually improve the teacher evaluation system in a timely manner. We hope that you will consider the perspectives of so many teachers around the state who couldn’t be here today, as well as the thought and research that we have put into these recommendations.

If it pleases you, Madame Chair and members of the committee, I have copies of our two-page brief to share with you.

Thank you Madame Chair and Members of the Committee for hearing my testimony today.