

## **COSTELLO MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Citing Discrimination**

## **LABOR COMMISSIONER COSTELLO VOICES SUPPORT FOR SB718**

OKLAHOMA CITY – Commissioner Mark Costello expressed his support to the authors of Senate Bill 718 which gives the State Superintendent control over staff hiring and policy. In a letter to President Pro Tempore Brian Bingman, Senate Education Chairman John Ford, and Speaker Kris Steele, Costello conveyed the need for reform by enacting SB718.

Recent actions that Costello called “unprofessional and disrespectful” by the State Board of Education toward elected State Superintendent Janet Barresi were the catalyst to SB718. The Board, comprised of appointees of former Gov. Brad Henry, blocked three of Barresi’s five hires during the first meeting of the Board of Education.

Costello references *The Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978*, which forbids discrimination in any aspect of employment because of pregnancy, childbirth, or a medical condition related to pregnancy or childbirth. Board Member Herb Rozell describes the pregnant applicant as “worthless.” Member Tim Gilpin followed with “can we have a motion that she not have her baby in April or May.” Members can be heard cackling at the offensive mockery by Rozell and Gilpin.

Costello stated, “Superintendent Barresi should be allowed to hire her own staff and to pursue reform to our current public education policy as expressed by the voters of Oklahoma.”

“The future of our next generation of Oklahomans is too important to be left in the hands of this appointed State Board of Education. SB718 will give Barresi and the State Department of Education the ability to function efficiently, and most importantly, effectively,” concluded Costello. This is a PATCO moment in Oklahoma history, like President Ronald Reagan, bold action is needed.