

February 9, 2024

Dear legislators:

I am in support of moving the functions of licensing to the Dept of Education as outlined under SB 1550. The reasons are outline: As President of Oregon Substitute Teachers Association I hear concerns about some of the new licenses that TSPC has created to solve the substitute teacher shortage – Restricted and Emergency Restricted licenses. Many of the same concern I notice in my work life as well. There are people placed into Restricted Sub licenses that are sponsored by the school districts who do not follow the rules enumerated by the license. They may take temporary jobs but may not take long term assignments because they may be great teachers but they do not have the training for teaching. This rule is not followed because they teach full time by being scheduled for 9 days, taking a day off with a different substitute teacher and then returning to the same assignment repeating this pattern until the job is over.

The benefit of training is the ability to create lesson plans, grade and create evaluation tools. This requirement ensures students of the quality of their education. Many school districts create schemes to avoid following this rule. They will schedule the teacher with restricted licenses for 9 days and then put them somewhere else. When we find out about this practice we have reported the school to TSPC for investigation and TSPC say that it is up to the teacher to report him or herself for breaking the law.

This will not happen. No teacher being put into a situation where the law is being broken will announce that they are breaking the law. Members have observed restricted substitutes being used over fully licensed subs because the teacher wants to help a family member with work. If that family member was a fully licensed sub that would not be a problem, but I have had it done in front of me when I was available and willing to work and the friend just got a district sponsorship. I have had to maintain my license with professional development and teacher training. I am perfectly capable of taking that job, but the school has hired a friend through district sponsorship stating that there was a shortage of subs.

TSPC appears to be using the restricted subs as a money making scheme. OSTA has had complaints about renewals being for only one year when they previously had a 3 year license.

Additionally, there seems to be confusion about when to start paying for long term substitute teaching pay and following the statutes. We surveyed different teachers in these positions. Teachers who are working for outsourced districts appear to not being given teaching contracts when their jobs are longer than 60 days. Who is the enforcing agent? WE hear from a teacher in Hillsboro working for ESS, another teacher in Coquille and another working for EduStaff. TSPC has been unwilling to enforce this rule. The teacher will not have the benefit of being a temporary teacher.

Supervision of the schools ability to follow licensing rules has been very lax. In this environment school districts are taking the local control guidance as a suggestion not a rule. Their motto appears to be “It is better to ask for permission over permission.” Because this agency is fee based over funded from the state coffers, it appears to be lolling to school districts to break rules in order to stay solvent

Additionally the contracting out of school district personnel staff is not being closely monitored by TSPC. They have allowed private out of state labor firms to hire teachers who must be sponsored because they do not have teacher training. The question is not whether they have gone through teacher training and have the skills to operate and manage a classroom. They do not have the benefit of student teaching and observation to certify that the person has the disposition to work in a school environment. Teachers must create lesson plans that are fail proof – study hall, movie or DVD or work sheets. No new or repetitive instruction occurs.

In conclusion, moving many of the licensing functions to TSPC will reduce the need to be self supporting by issuing licenses. This self funding mechanism does not work. The amount of time it takes to get a license is getting longer and longer. The agency is hard to get a hold of and does not answer its phone in a timely manner. I have heard mistake where they charge the licensee extra money because the license has lapsed because the teacher was uncertain about renewal questions.

The Department of Education has the resources to reduce funding for dollars through licensing.

I support the changes in SB 1550.

Leslie Polson

930 Garnet St NE, Salem, OR 97301