

**Testimony Before the Senate Education and
Workforce Development Committee
Toya Fick – Government Affairs Director, Stand for Children
Wednesday, May 1, 2013**

Good afternoon.

Chair Gelser, Vice-Chair Sprenger and Reardon, and members of the committee:

For the record, my name is Toya Fick and I'm the government affairs director with Stand for Children. I am also a former middle school teacher.

Thank you for inviting me to speak this afternoon.

On behalf of our members throughout the state, I am here to testify in support of Senate Bill 228.

I would like to spend my time this afternoon focusing on the need for new educators to have mentors. I will illustrate this point through my own experience as a new teacher nearly a decade ago.

I began teaching in Louisiana in the fall of 2003. Fortunately for me and for my students, the state provided an experienced mentor for every new teacher – even 10 years ago. And I needed one, because my teaching assignment was in a school that was in that bottom 10 lowest-performing schools in the state. So of nearly 1,600 public schools in Louisiana, my school was in the bottom 10 in terms of student achievement. To say I needed all the support I could get is an understatement. Luckily, I had an excellent mentor for my first two years. She had over 20 years of classroom experience and had been brought in by the district to lead my school's English department.

I learned countless techniques from her – from how to differentiate instruction to how to manage classroom behavior to engage the parents and guardians of my students. And it was amazing to have her feedback from weekly observations. She would come in once a week (during her planning period), sit in the back of the room, take notes on my lesson and we would discuss her feedback after school. So that tomorrow, my lesson would be better. I would also observe her on a regular basis and steal just about everything she did.

I know that I could not have been nearly as effective without her guidance. And my kids would have suffered without that additional support.

Unfortunately the number of new educators in Oregon who qualify for the mentoring program outnumber the funds available.

Currently, mentors are not provided for over half of the new teachers and administrators in this state. These educators are left to sink or swim on their own.

In these times of larger class sizes and common core coming down the pike – new educators need the help today more than ever before.

Senate bill 228 simply removes language that requires an automatic increase in the per grantee amount. Because of the cap already in statute, this language is unnecessary and hampers ODE's ability to effectively and efficiently administer this program.

If ODE is allowed to make considerations and calculations without this requirement, our state can afford to provide more mentors to new educators.

Thanks again for your time and I'm happy to take any questions.