

February 28, 2023

To: House Committee on Education
From: Gabrielle DeLeone, Columbia REN Coordinator
RE: Support HB 3177

I am the Columbia REN Coordinator at Columbia Gorge ESD. I am grateful for the opportunity to share this testimony in support of HB 3177, which would give much needed funding to the EAC to support the recruitment and retention of educators across the state.

The Columbia REN serves 10 school districts. Each very different and varying in need. One common need they share is supporting the teachers who are new to the profession. Within our school districts we have:

- 70 teachers who are new to the profession and in their first three years.
- 51% of new teachers are teaching while simultaneously working towards licensure in an educator prep program. All of our districts are using restricted and emergency licensure as a pathway to teaching and a way to fill open positions.
- 17% of our new teachers who teach in our most rural schools, almost all of which began their careers on emergency or restricted licenses.

Three things we know for certain in our region:

1. We lose $\frac{1}{3}$ of our new teachers (they either move out of state or out of the profession) within their first two years.
2. Half of our new teachers are on emergency or restricted licenses and are working on their licensure coursework while they teach.
3. Funding and access to mentorship for every new teacher in our region is significantly lacking.

The Columbia REN is researching potential ways to better support our newest teachers, scale up and spread supports we know are working, and bring mentoring and professional learning to districts who have limited access. Mentorship and professional learning supports we are working to scale and sustain for new teachers that include, but are not limited to:

- Access to a culturally affirming internal or external mentor (depending on district need).
- Access to professional learning opportunities that are designed with the needs of new teachers in mind.
- Access to collaborative opportunities with other new teachers to build connectedness.
- Access to high-quality, culturally responsive professional learning for mentors so they can have the tools to do their best work.

Mentorship is an essential strategy to support and subsequently retain educators. Effective, robust mentorship programs provide new educators with the support they need early in their careers to grow and develop. One new teacher in our region shared, "My mentor has provided me with a safe place where I am comfortable sharing ideas or trying things that I'm nervous about." Additionally, mentorship provides experienced educators with opportunities to expand their own practice. One of our mentors said, "I've looked more inward now that I have been mentoring. I am breaking down what I do and why I do it for my mentee and because of that it's improved my own teaching." We believe that our current workforce crisis requires the intentional support of our newest teachers.

I encourage the committee to support HB 3177 and dedicate more resources to mentoring and overall recruitment and retention of Oregon educators. Thank you for considering this bill.

Gabrielle DeLeone
Columbia REN Coordinator
Columbia Gorge Education Service District.