

Submitter: Kelly AndrewsDenney
On Behalf Of: Teachers
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure: SB5506

I'm here to ask that you allocate at least \$10.3 billion to the state school fund so we can slow the crisis in public education due, in part, to teachers leaving the profession.

For the first 13 years of my teaching career, i was excellent. I built strong relationships with students and despite being assigned the most challenging classes, I rarely had classroom management issues. I've gone to court for kids, bought them shoes, spent more money than I care to know on granola bars and pencils, and I loved my job.

I've also sobbed through funerals, far too many from suicides. Schools can't fix everything, but there were deaths we might have prevented if we'd had the mental health resources to serve our students. Still, until 2020, if you'd asked me what my dream job was, I would have said teaching.

In the fall of 2021, we were sent back to school buildings. The trauma we all had endured was never adequately addressed. The emotional problems these kids came back with were more than we could handle. We have one school psychologist for 1100 students, and one counselor for every 300 kids.

Even experts in education had no idea what we dealt with after distance learning. We were given no extra time to adjust. The schedule didn't change. Nothing was built into the school day to support students who had lost learning. I had students in second-year algebra who were ready for pre-calculus next to kids who didn't understand what a variable was. And I was expected to differentiate without time or resources to do so.

I have little time to address student behavior, but it is worse than I have ever seen in my career. I still have good relationships with kids, but trying to teach them, even for two minutes at a time, is like trying to hold 30 ping pong balls underwater.

I arrive half an hour before my paid day starts and stay half an hour late, and I still don't have time to do my job. I resent the expectation that I take my work home. All of this will get worse as teachers quit because the system depends on their unpaid work. If funding is reduced, class sizes will get bigger, and our already insufficient resources will be reduced. Teachers will be overworked and stressed, they will leave, and those who remain will be even more overworked and stressed. Teachers and students deserve better.

I started getting migraines in 2020 and, like many, I have been dealing with depression since then. I don't get migraines during the summer, and I can't ignore that anymore. I have requested to teach half-time next year to attend to my mental health, but if I can't, this will be my last year. This job asks too much, and many of us have little left to give.