

Chair Frederick, Vice Chair Webber. and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jackson Heimer, and I am a loved one of a student teacher at Oregon State University. I am submitting this testimony in strong support of SB717, which seeks to address financial barriers for aspiring educators and ensure mentor teachers receive fair compensation.

As a friend, roommate and confidant, I have had a front row seat to the dedication, passion and sacrifice my loved one has shown throughout their journey into teaching. They have spent countless hours reading literature to become the best teacher possible, lesson planning, learning and practicing classroom management skills and doing their absolute best to adapt to the needs of *all* students.

The reality is, the financial burden of student teaching is not just a burden, it has far-reaching consequences beyond the individual. Nearly 44% of teachers leave the profession within the first five years, a statistic that should raise alarm bells across the nation. One of the driving factors of this turnover rate is the financial instability that new educators face. Teaching, as noble and important as it is, does not offer the financial stability that many new teachers desperately need. The transition from student teacher, full time with no pay, to a first year teacher with little pay, contributes to the turnover crisis as these professionals are receiving next to nothing when it comes to paychecks.

We are already experiencing a severe shortage of teachers across the country, particularly in critical areas such as math, science, and special education. A large part of this shortage stems from the fact that fewer people are entering the teaching profession in the first place, many of them discouraged by the financial burden of student teaching and the prospects of low pay after graduation. Providing compensation for student teachers is a necessary step toward addressing this crisis. By offering fair compensation, we can help ensure that more individuals can afford to pursue their passion for teaching, by reducing the financial pressure that forces many to leave the profession before they've even begun.

Additionally, compensating student teachers would help retain talent within the profession. Teaching requires immense skill, dedication and *passion*. If we do not make the profession more accessible and financially stable from the outset, we risk losing the bright, committed individuals who would have made outstanding educators. If we want to address the teacher shortage and improve educational outcomes, we need to invest in those who are training to become the teachers of tomorrow.

Passing this bill is not just about fair compensation; it is about ensuring that we continue to attract and retain the next generation of educators. It is about valuing their work and acknowledging the profound impact they will have on our children's futures. By paying student teachers, we can begin to address the teacher shortage, reduce the high turnover rate, and create a more sustainable and supportive pathway for new educators.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Jackson Heimer, Concerned Citizen