

Submitter: McKenzie Bezates
On Behalf Of: HB 5006
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

On March 12, I received a reduction in force notice from my district. As a second year language arts teacher, I along with 58 other teachers in my district were reduced because of a projected budget shortfall that would be unable to fund our positions. Teachers deserve better, but more than that, students deserve better. Our kids, and I say the words our kids because it is a collective community duty to care for all kids. Our kids deserve better from us. Kids thrive when they have consistency, safety, strong relationships, and reliability. My principal often uses the phrase clarity is kindness. Right now, our kids lack clarity on the reductions happening to their teachers, their schools, and their programs. When students lose the consistency, safety, and the reliability of the adults they count on, it is destabilizing. Kids largely don't understand the fiscal, contractual, and legal aspects to teacher layoffs due to budget shortfalls. What they do understand is that the adults they rely on to provide them with the safety and care they deserve are potentially being removed from their lives. This is damaging to them and sends a message that we as adults are unreliable. When kids are safe and can count on us, they thrive. They are willing to stretch themselves academically, socially, and emotionally. They are willing to try new things, fail, and try again. They learn perseverance, resilience, they learn empathy, care, and community. Our kids deserve better from us. They are watching us, learning from us. Our kids are learning what is valued, how it is valued, and the ways in which the adults in their lives model these values. They will take these lessons into their own transition to adulthood. So my question to all of you is, what values do we want to show our kids? I know my answer to this question is that our kids matter, their education and well-being matter. And I will use my voice as a caring and reliable adult to fight for all kids in their present and for their future. Thank you.