

March 1, 2023

To: House Committee on Education  
From: Clarissa Buchholz, High School Biology Teacher - Centennial HS  
RE: Support for HB 3178, Teacher Scholars Program expansion

Chair Neron, Vice-Chairs Wright and Hudson and members of the committee,

My name is Clarissa Buchholz and I am a teacher at Centennial High School where I teach Biology and Anatomy. I appreciate the opportunity to testify in front of you today to express my support for HB 3178, which will allow Oregon's Teacher Scholars Program a much needed expansion.

I am supportive of this bill because I had the opportunity to host a student teacher and I also spend a lot of time working with other early career educators and through my experiences with them, I believe that programs like this are a critical part of the state infrastructure to knock down barriers to becoming an educator.

Last year, in my 6th year of teaching, I served as a cooperating teacher to a student teacher from University of Portland. Although she was experiencing immense stress, she exceeded any expectations I had for a student teacher and provided so much support to me and my students throughout the year. One of the biggest sources of stress for her was that she was putting in double the work of a typical job in teaching full time and also doing course work, all while not getting paid. Thankfully her drive and passion for education kept her going,, but it always struck me as extremely unfair what we ask our future teachers to endure.

Fortunately for my student teacher, she had a financial support system that could keep her afloat through the process, but this is not true for so many aspiring educators. The recent Educator Advancement Council report cites that with each milestone towards employment in education, fewer and fewer diverse candidates are present and completing the program— many who do not complete their teacher prep programs say tuition and increasing costs are a barrier. That's why the Teacher Scholars Program is so important. I teach at a very diverse school with students coming from many backgrounds and languages, but unfortunately our certified staff does not reflect our demographics, not even close. I have seen that when we have teachers that are representative of our students' identities, the students feel more supported and engaged.

In addition, we know that the 2022 awards were maxed out, meeting the needs of many who see tuition as a barrier for their path to the profession, proving how useful the program has already been for starting educators. I have done a lot of work with early-career and aspiring educators through Oregon Education Association programs, and the thing that continues to come up is how difficult it is to navigate the financial stress of tuition payments and loans in those first few years. I am confident that each and every person I have spoken with would jump at the chance to use a scholarship program like this, and it would open doors for many who

have been steered away from the profession due to high costs of tuition. I would hope that striving to get more teachers into the career would get the attention it deserves from our state leaders.

In the midst of a workforce crisis, this is a forward-looking solution that centers the bridge between what allows our inspired students in the classroom to envision a path to becoming a future educator and a direct benefit to our incoming workforce.

I encourage the committee to support HB 3178. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Clarissa Buchholz  
High School Science Teacher  
Centennial High School - Centennial Education Association