

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

My name is Laura Stentz and I am a second year teacher in Lebanon. 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.

I started my graduate teaching program with a financial plan. I decided to enter the two year graduate teacher education program through Portland State University. I knew that I would be an unpaid student teacher my second year in the program. My plan was to work multiple jobs to save as much as I could during the first year.

What I could not plan for was the unexpected and tragic loss of my partner in my first months, who had moved with me to Portland to allow me to attend the program. The grief and trauma from this event almost caused me to drop out, but I knew he had sacrificed to support me and that he knew how passionate I was to become a public educator. But how was I going to pursue this, now living on my own?

I was only able to graduate and survive with the help of friends and family. I had to work much longer into the program than advised, for many weeks after a full day in the classroom. I substitute taught for other classes on my prep. It was still not enough, and I am still experiencing fallout from the financial implications from my time working unpaid in graduate school.

**I urge the committee to support SB717 and its impact on Oregon's educators.**

Thank you for your time and consideration.

**Sincerely,  
Laura Stentz**