

Submitter: Karyn Knecht
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB717

Chair Frederick, Vice Chair Webber. and Members of the Committee,
My name is Karyn Knecht, and I am a second year teacher in Springfield school district. I recently graduated with a Masters in Teaching from Pacific 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.

I decided to become a teacher at 30 years old, entering a second career. I completed my masters degree on nights and weekends while working full time, paycheck to paycheck, to pay bills. I was also taking out student loans to pay for tuition. When it came time for my full time student teaching, I had to fully live off of student loans to pay for rent, bills, health insurance, and necessities like food. As an adult living independently, having given up my salary job, to pursue a passion for teaching, I often wondered if I was crazy to be a student teacher - paying \$6000 in order to receive credit from my grad program for work I was doing for free. I entered my teaching career with \$40,000 in student loans, having fully expended my personal savings to take out minimal loans. Additionally, in a predatory renting environment, student teachers can be denied housing because they don't have an income three times the cost of rent.

The cooperating teacher I did my student teaching with was compensated \$600. I learned more from him than any other aspect of my masters program. It was unfair that he was compensated so little, considering I paid \$6000 to student teach.

I was privileged enough to be able to get through the financial crisis that student teaching creates. However, working for free while paying for that opportunity in tuition is not possible for many aspiring teachers. For a career field that lacks in diversity, we know that financial barriers prevent many potential teachers from entering our workforce. I am hopeful that this bill will help address staffing shortages and lack of staff diversity in Oregon schools.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Karyn Knecht

karynknecht@gmail.com

5th grade teacher

Springfield School District