



*Great Public Schools for Every Student*

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Hannah St. Clair  
Chairperson, Aspiring Educators  
National Education Association

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

My name is Hannah St. Clair, and I am a former student teacher at the University of Oregon (M.Ed Curriculum and Teaching, ESOL Endorsement, 2024). 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 went to the University of Oregon for my undergraduate and graduate degrees. I chose this university for its strong social justice stance in their curriculum, but I had no clue about the program's progression to entering the classroom (observations, practicums, student teaching). I was an out-of-state student for all 5 years of my bachelors and masters. My one-year master's program was when I completed a year-long student teaching. During my undergraduate years, I would never have been able to afford a car, so job opportunities were limited. I worked during the school year on campus at an International Center and during the summer on campus as a Camp Counselor. I quickly realized when I began my master's that I could not get to any school placements without a car. I rarely received a paycheck over \$500 during the school year during undergrad, and I knew that would be reduced when student teaching began.

My family in New York state had an old manual Mini Cooper that they outgrew. This Mini Cooper had a scratch down the side of it, and the car insurance company had said they would total the car rather than replace the door. It leaked oil from its engine and the tires leaked air. But it ran. My mom ended up driving the car cross-country and spent Labor Day weekend teaching me how to drive stick shift. After 3 days, she left, and I was on my own with a totally new-to-me car that I had just learned how to drive.

In the 4 years of undergrad, I worked multiple jobs, was awarded scholarships, had financial help from family, and took out loans. In the one year of my masters, I had to take out the same amount of loans as I did during my entire 4 years of undergrad. My program required courses in the evenings, and I worked an on-campus job. Working hours fluctuated with the growing number of hours of student teaching every term. Without a steady income, I often got my groceries from the food pantry rather than the grocery store. I became a sub in the district I was student teaching in but was told I could only sub a certain number of days before I would impact the hours needed for student teaching. I ended up subbing for my own cooperating teacher more than I was allowed and did not tell my program advisor. Without the days of subbing, I would not have been able to financially complete the year.

I think the only reason I accepted this as reality was because I didn't know of the alternatives before I went to college. As an 18-year-old, I was so excited to go to school to become an educator. It wasn't until my junior year of college that I realized the fact that I would have to work unpaid for a year to get my

license, and that was only because I lobbied about it as a Director of the National Education Association at the U.S. Capitol when I was 21 years old with Oregon's federally elected officials, including Representative Hoyle, Blumenaur, Bonamici, and Senators Merkley and Wyden. Oregon's federally elected officials were shocked to hear about the financial inequity of unpaid student teaching. They shared my concerns and affirmed that this is one reason we have an educator shortage and a primarily White, middle-class demographic of educators. Compensation during this clinical practice is one way to diversify, incentivize, and prioritize the future of public education.

My university did not emphasize options to make any money during student teaching- they did share scholarship opportunities (albeit limited), and they made it difficult to even become a substitute. In fact, they told us that if we worked as an EA or a sub and it impacted the number of hours we student taught, then we would risk not gaining our licenses. We were told that if we could not complete our student teaching hours in that year, then we should do the program in two years so that one could more easily work a paid job outside of student teaching hours and courses.

Many of my classmates also worked multiple jobs, fudging their hours of student teaching to make ends meet, and took out loans. What is the impact on educator retention and student outcome when aspiring educators cannot fully participate in their student teaching, learn from experienced mentor teachers, and have enough hours in the day to sleep?

It was a rough year, and now that I work a job that is paid, I could NEVER imagine putting myself through that again.

Unpaid student teaching is an inaccessible and inequitable pathway to becoming an educator, but it is incredibly important for future educators to have the experience of student teaching. Educators who do not complete supervised practice are 70-80% more likely to leave the profession within 3 years, which leads to an increased cost to recruit new educators. The most recent (2024) estimates nationally are \$20,000 or more in costs for every position that has to be filled. By paying student teachers during their supervised clinical experience, there is both short-term and long-term savings to recruit and retain high quality, prepared educators who stay in the profession.

I urge you to support SB 717 to provide high quality, committed educators for Oregon students.

Thank you for your time and consideration. On the following page, I have included resources from the National Education Association, Education Commission of the States, and Prepared to Teach with more information about the importance of affordable pathways and the pathway to create them.

Sincerely,  
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# Additional Resources for Compensation for Future Educators

**National Education Association (2022a).** *Elevating the education professions: Solving educator shortages by making public education an attractive and competitive career path.* NEA, Washington, DC. Retrieved from <https://www.nea.org/resource-library/solving-educator-shortages-making-public-education-attractive-and-competitive-career-path>

NEA's report on the shortage provides a wealth of data from recognized national sources (e.g., the U.S. Department of Education) and builds the case for policy actions needed on a variety of fronts to overcome the churn that is currently built into the systems and policies governing teacher preparation, school operation, and career opportunities.

**Mansukhani, D. & Santos, F. (2021).** #MoreLearningLessDebt: Voices of aspiring teachers on why money matters. New York: Prepared To Teach. Retrieved from [https://assets-global.website-files.com/648a407f22007944606d9581/64a1e3dc18c4513420509621\\_%23MoreLearningLessDebt.pdf](https://assets-global.website-files.com/648a407f22007944606d9581/64a1e3dc18c4513420509621_%23MoreLearningLessDebt.pdf)

**Education Commission of the States. (2022).** *Teacher recruitment and retention 2022: 50-State comparison.* Retrieved from <https://reports.ecs.org/comparisons/teacher-recruitment-and-retention-2022-06>.

**Prepared to Teach (website)** <https://www.preparedtoteach.org/>

This organization conducts and presents some of the best research and resources on year-long clinical practice and paid student teaching as the keys to sustainable quality educator preparation to meet the needs of all students, schools, districts, and communities. Their work has resulted in a statewide transformation in New Mexico and various other examples of change across the country.

<https://educate.bankstreet.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1025&context=faculty-staff>

**Three overarching reports** from Prepared to Teach provide information on affordability and sustainability of programs that pay student teachers for year-long clinical practice (not the teacher of record). Adding Registered Apprenticeships may further enhance the affordability equation.

**Dennis, H. DeMoss, K. (2021).** *The affordability imperative: Creating equitable access to quality teacher preparation.* Retrieved from <https://www.preparedtoteach.org/resources/the-affordability-imperative-creating-equitable-access-to-teacher-preparation>

**Dennis, H., & DeMoss, K. (2021).** *Simple shifts: Paying aspiring teachers with existing resources.* New York: Prepared To Teach. Retrieved from <https://www.preparedtoteach.org/resources/simple-shifts-paying-aspiring-teachers-with-existing-resources>

**Dennis, H., & DeMoss, K. (2021).** *The residency revolution: Funding high quality teacher preparation.* New York: Prepared To Teach. Retrieved from <https://www.preparedtoteach.org/resources/the-residency-revolution-funding-high-quality-teacher-preparation>