

717 Written Testimony

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

My name is Sanne Cai, and I am a senior music education major at Pacific University, currently serving as a student teacher in the Hillsboro School District. 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.

How many 21-year-olds do you know that have 12 to 15-hour long days? In fact, how many people in *your* life are working this many hours, regardless of their age? 9 hours each day, working for free? I ask you to reflect on your lives and wonder if this amount of time and labor being put into service **for free** is *fair* for the countless number of student teachers who are currently working in your school districts, serving *your* kids.

I am proud of my work, and I love to teach my middle school band students. However, I, like many of my peers, have to pay \$700 in rent, \$100 in car insurance, and \$50 every other week for gas to get to school every single day. Add in soaring grocery costs, and the cost of living rises higher yet. As a person from a lower-income family, I support myself and the cost of my education. I do not have the privilege of some of my peers to be able to count on the financial assistance of their families; if my family could, I know they would. And yet, I have footed the thousands of dollars for my college education myself. So many young educators like me, those with marginalized identities *especially*, find themselves wondering whether or not this is even worth it if we have to *pay* for our labor and not *be* paid.

This financial strain on young educators is the reason why we see so many leave the teaching profession. Across the country, 44% of teachers leave within their first five years, often due to financial stressors of unpaid teaching. Why is a job like teaching, one with such far-reaching impact to shape the future generations of our country, have an attrition rate this high? This impacts the quality of education our students, *your children*, receive. If we truly care about our communities and the quality of education our children receive, then I *urge you* to support SB717 and fund the future of your children's teachers.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Sanne Cai
Pacific University, Hillsboro School District