

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

My name is Sophie Robinson, and I am an inspiring educator, student leader, student intern, and future student teacher. 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 am currently in my junior year of an elementary education majoring doing my student interning of 40 hours a term. I work another job that supports me financially and allows me to have a roof over my head. I have already been struggling to keep up with full coursework, over 20 hours a week of working, and an additional job of working in an elementary classroom. I have wanted to teach since I was little, and want nothing more than to be a teacher in my own classroom. I am scared of this goal not becoming true because of financial concerns. Next year I am expected to maintain a full course load while additionally teaching and planning lessons for my student teaching placement. I am passionate about teaching and am scared to risk my academics with working two jobs just to afford housing. Everyone wants the world to be a better place, and I truly believe this begins with good teachers. Good teachers are going to be harder to get when they can not afford to live while student teaching.

For many aspiring teachers, the practicum is a vital step toward entering the profession. It offers hands-on experience, mentorship, and the chance to develop essential classroom management skills. However, a significant barrier prevents some from completing this requirement: the financial hardship of being unable to work while student teaching. In many areas, teacher candidates are restricted from holding part-time jobs during their practicum due to the demanding schedule and rigorous expectations. This creates a heavy financial burden, especially for those who rely on income to cover rent, tuition, and everyday expenses. As a result, talented and dedicated individuals who might otherwise become educators are forced to reconsider their career path. The irony is evident—while schools struggle with teacher shortages, systemic obstacles keep qualified candidates from entering the field. To address this issue, education policymakers must implement solutions such as stipends, grants, or paid practicum opportunities to support future educators financially. Ensuring that teaching remains accessible to individuals from all economic backgrounds is crucial to building a strong and diverse workforce in education.

I urge you, as a passionate educator, to hear the concerns of myself and others. Education is vital to every citizen and it begins with the teachers. I urge you as someone who received education, to think of the effort that teachers put into their work and understand the urgency of this situation. I urge the committee to support SB717 and its impact on Oregon's educator pipeline.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Sophie Robinson  
Oregon State University Student Teacher