

Dear, Chair Frederick, Co-Chair Weber, and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony for Senate Bill 717, which would create a pilot program for stipends to student teachers. As the daughter of an educator and friend of educators, I strongly support this bill.

Oregon currently ranks 40th in education nationwide. To address our education shortfalls, we must support our educators, particularly aspiring educators by attracting them to the profession. We want to recruit passionate educators from all backgrounds, including those who may not be able to go one year or more without adequate pay. As an underrepresented engineer who came from a low-income household, I know that I would not have been able to manage this.

I am originally from Wisconsin. The reason I moved to Oregon in 2018 was because Oregon State University offered me a Graduate Teaching Assistantship (GTA), and no other school I applied to did, despite getting accepted to some of the nation's top-ranked engineering schools. I could not afford the schooling itself, but without the GTA, I would have had to rely on loans to pay rent and buy food. My story shows that people are willing to leave the state if it allows them to access adequate funding. In states like Michigan, student teachers are offered a stipend. What is to stop some of our best teachers from leaving to ensure that are able to make ends meet?

I urge the committee to please support SB 717 as one step towards improving the lives and education of both teachers and students in Oregon.

Sincerely,
Esther Baas