

Submitter: Chip Fischer
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB717

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

I write in support of SB 717, legislation that seeks to address financial barriers for aspiring teachers, to encourage mentor teachers, and to provide means to set aspiring teachers up for future professional entry, retention and longevity. Without this legislation, quality teachers will be deterred from entering and staying in this profession. This creates a great disservice to our children and our society. In summary, the relief of burdens this legislation creates will benefit both the individual prospective teacher and the education system.

I am a family member of a student teacher at Oregon State University. She wishes to enter the teaching profession. Her future as a teacher is in peril. Her financial burdens are already overwhelming. She funds her own education. This creates an immediate and long-term financial burden. Student loans need to be repaid. Regular bills need to be paid both now and in the future. But the fact is, she needs as much teaching experience as she can get to be a great teacher, and she should be compensated for it.

To be a successful and competent teacher, she devotes countless hours reading educational literature, crafting lesson plans, mastering classroom management skills, and adapting to the diverse needs of her students while also being a full-time student. Opportunities and time to develop a revenue stream are minimal, and useless for her future purposes if she is not in the classroom. What good is a part-time job such as a waitress or barista, for example, for such a student's future as a great teacher? To be the best teacher she needs to be in the classroom. To make ends meet she needs to somehow make money. This legislation would help.

Enough things already discourage great people from becoming teachers and staying in the profession. Nearly 44% of teachers leave the profession within their first five years, a startling statistic. One of the key contributors to this turnover is financial instability. The transition from full-time, unpaid student teaching to a first-year teaching salary, often insufficient to meet living expenses, forces many talented educators out of the profession before they've even had the chance to establish themselves. Currently, despite being an outstanding student, my family member juggles three jobs outside the classroom just to afford living expenses in Oregon.

Our country already faces a severe teacher shortage. A major reason for this shortage is that fewer individuals are entering the field, discouraged by the financial

strain of student teaching for free and the prospect of low pay after graduation. Providing compensation for student teachers is a necessary step toward reversing this trend. By easing financial pressures, we can ensure that more individuals are able to pursue their passion for education without the fear of financial hardship.

Additionally, fair compensation for student teachers would help retain talented educators. Teaching demands immense skill, dedication, and passion. If we fail to make the profession more accessible and financially sustainable from the outset, we risk losing bright, committed individuals who would have made exceptional teachers. Investing in future educators means investing in the success of our students and the strength of our education system. And being paid for their work is simply a matter of fairness.

Passing SB 717 is not just about fair pay, though. It is about ensuring that we continue to attract and retain the next generation of educators. It is about valuing their contributions and recognizing the profound impact they will have on our children's futures. By providing compensation for student teachers, we take a crucial step toward solving the teacher shortage, reducing turnover, and creating a more sustainable, supportive path for new educators. Please pass this legislation.