

Submitter: Paul Heimer
On Behalf Of: Elizabeth Heimer
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB717

My name is Paul Heimer and I have worked in public education continuously since 1994 as a teacher and school counselor. I am writing in support of SB 717.

Student teaching is an important piece of the process of becoming a teacher. For practically all students going into the education profession the months they spend student teaching in a real classroom provides the most critical component of their college education. However, it can, and often does create an undo financial obstacle for those students as it is taking on a full time job without compensation, as well as the need to spend money on tuition to complete the degree in their chosen field. This leads many to take on an additional job and/or incur more debt at the most critical juncture of their education, leading many to choose not to continue their dream of being a teacher.

In many areas of the country there is a shortage of teachers. We want students to choose the field because they are driven and passionate about education. Taking away one obstacle by providing a minimal amount of compensation in place of incurring more debt is a way to get quality people into the field of education.

I have worked to encourage students who express interest in teaching to pursue the work. They often get mixed messages from others about staying away from teaching because of the financial cost of a degree, the challenges posed by things such as student teaching, and the relatively small financial benefit compared to their peers who earn college degrees. Excellent public education continues to be one of the essential components in providing a fair, level playing field for all members of society to have a chance at success. High quality teaching is the foundation of this component. This bill would provide a fair reward for those choosing this avenue of public service.