

Written Testimony in Support of SB717 Strengthening our Educator Pipeline

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

My name is Melissa Timm, and I am a 27-year veteran teacher currently serving as an English Language Development Facilitator at Cornelius Elementary. I remember what it was like thirty years ago when I prepared for the most challenging part of my education career at Pacific University - student teaching. In addition to preparing the best lessons I could for my fourth-grade students, I was also concerned about having enough money for groceries. 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 recently attended COSA's Multilingual Learner Conference in Eugene, Oregon. I was pleased to see that one of COSA's priorities relates to the workforce - the ability to protect and grow efforts around workforce diversity and continue to invest in hard-to-staff positions. I would purport that one of the reasons it is so challenging to attract a diverse workforce is because of the unpaid practicum experiences aspiring educators go through in their career path. This is particularly close to my heart as I teach at a PK-4th grade dual language school and we always endeavor to hire qualified bilingual staff if possible. This financial strain of perhaps needing to work beyond their hours in the classroom and their hours at home preparing for their hours in the classroom must seem insurmountable to today's aspiring educators. My daughter is currently a sophomore in a music education program. She currently works four jobs, which she will struggle to maintain in a year when her student teaching begins.

The reality is that in much of Oregon our student population is diverse, and our students deserve to see themselves reflected in the teachers they look up to. SB717 would attract qualified mentor teachers through mentor teacher compensation as well as diverse and qualified aspiring educators. We need a high-quality and committed teaching workforce and the reality is there is a shortage.

I urge the committee to support SB717 and its impact on Oregon's educator pipeline.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Melissa Timm

E.L.D. Facilitator at Cornelius Elementary, Forest Grove, OR

OCDE Project GLAD® Field Consultant