

# Madison Board of Education

Mr. Robert S. Peterson, Superintendent  
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Chair Manning, Vice Chair Bird, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my written testimony with you regarding House Bill 583. My name is Rob Peterson, and I am the superintendent of the Madison Local School District in Richland County. I am here today to testify in support of HB 583 on behalf of the Madison Local Schools and all of the public school districts in Richland County.

Prior to the pandemic we were all finding it extremely difficult to fully replace all of our staff who were on leave for a particular day. The substitute shortage was then exacerbated by the pandemic, however we were provided with flexibility during the 2020-21 school year, which did provide some relief. Unfortunately that flexibility was not extended to the start of the 2021-22 school year, which again, left our schools with a significant shortage of substitutes. The shortages caused many very serious issues in our districts, including, but not limited to, combining multiple classrooms in spaces such as gymnasiums or libraries, supervised by one teacher or administrator; teachers giving up their planning periods, therefore reducing their time to plan for their own classes; using administrators and central office staff as substitutes, often times leaving the school office without an administrator; and ultimately closing buildings on multiple occasions.

Once the temporary substitute flexibility was provided this school year, we were able to hire 30 additional substitutes for our district. All of our substitutes were interviewed prior to employment and provided with extensive support from both our staff and administration. As superintendents we have found that many of the substitutes that we have hired with this flexibility have performed as well, or in some cases even outperformed, the substitutes we employ who have bachelor's degrees. Several of our substitutes are currently in education programs at our area colleges and universities, and they do a great job and are receiving excellent experience as well. Without the continued flexibility to begin next school year, I anticipate that our districts will experience a tremendous amount of disruption in the education of our students, much like we have seen in the last few years when the flexibility has not been in place.

Thank you, Representatives Bird and Jones, for sponsoring the bill, and I urge you all to approve House Bill 583 so that it is in place to begin the 2022-23 school year. Thank you all for your time and consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Robert S. Peterson  
Superintendent  
Madison Local School District