

Committees:

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Sponsor Testimony on House Bill 554
Before the Senate Committee on Primary & Secondary Education
November 15, 2022

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Sykes and Members of the Senate Primary & Secondary Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony for House Bill 554, which will streamline the process for former teachers who want to return to the classroom.

No one in this room is surprised to hear that we have a teacher shortage in Ohio. Furthermore, no one is surprised to hear that the teacher shortage in Ohio is going to get worse. We may not have enough students in Higher Education programs right now to cover the number of teachers who are forecasted to retire in the next few years.

House Bill 554 alone will not fix this problem. We will need a comprehensive look at the many factors affecting the numbers of teachers who are wanting to leave the profession. We need a comprehensive look at the causes that are affecting the drop in high school students who would like to be a teacher someday.

However, House Bill 554 will help some schools in Ohio for the short term while we are working out the bigger issues of making the profession one that attracts more students to become educators in the future.

House Bill 554 directs the Department of Education to issue a two-year teaching license to returning teachers who left the profession in good standing, and would require said teacher to take 18 CEUs during that two-year license period in order to qualify for a typical five-year license.

It is our belief that smoothing out the initial steps for licensure will attract some back to education as a profession during an anticipated time of critical need. House Bill 554 could help facilitate the return of a retiree who allowed their license to lapse but would like to return to the classroom, an English teacher who left the profession for a journalism career, a career tech welding teacher who left for a construction job, a math teacher who left to sell insurance, or any countless number of others in a similar scenario.

House Bill 554 is not likely to attract mass numbers to the teaching profession, but if it could attract an average of one teacher per county in an area of critical need like Chemistry, Physics, or Calculus, it would make a positive impact on workforce development in Ohio.

Chair Brenner and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important piece of legislation today. Rep. Lightbody and I are happy to answer your questions.