

House Committees

State & Local Government, Ranking Member
Primary and Secondary Education
Public Utilities Committee
Ways & Means Committee
Pensions Committee



Contact Information

77 S. High Street Columbus, OH 43215
<https://ohiohouse.gov/members/sean-p-brennan>
Rep14@ohiohouse.gov
614-466-3485

**Representative Sean Patrick Brennan
14th House District**

Sponsor Testimony

H.B. 563: Enact the Future Educators Support Act

Good morning, Chair Manning, Vice Chair Fowler Arthur, Ranking Member Robinson and fellow members of the Ohio House Primary and Secondary Education Committee. I am grateful for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on H.B. 563 – the Future Educators Support Act – a bill that addresses an issue of great importance to the future of education: investing in student teachers.

The teaching profession is the foundation of our society. Teachers shape the minds of future generations, instill values, and prepare students for meaningful lives and careers. However, the path to becoming a teacher is fraught with financial challenges, especially during the student-teaching phase. If we want to attract and retain talented educators, we must address the burdens they face.

It is well known that we are facing a teacher shortage in our state and nation. There has been a decrease in students enrolled in education programs and there is a struggle to retain teachers due to a number of factors such as low pay, burnout, and lack of autonomy.

Further, there are increasing concerns related to student-to-teacher ratios and improper certification, where courses are taught by teachers whose licenses do not match the courses they are teaching.

H.B. 563 will work to address many of these areas of concern by removing some the major financial barriers to entering the career via three permissive practices.

First, it allows for a school district to pay student teachers in the district at least the state minimum wage and offer them the same healthcare benefits that are offered to the district's teachers.

Additionally, it allows for the Department of Education and Workforce to provide either a cost-of-living stipend or test fee waivers or reimbursements to students in teacher preparation programs based on financial need.

Finally, the bill authorizes the Department of Higher Education to waive tuition during the time that one is student teaching. Higher education costs continue to rise, leaving many student teachers with significant debt. As they enter a profession that is notoriously underpaid, this debt can become a lifelong burden.

I can attest to the financial challenges student teaching presenting to me in the early 90s. When you are student teaching you are paying full tuition, while working fulltime during the school day, as well as nights and weekends planning, grading, preparing for evaluations, among many other requirements, all while not getting paid and not having the time to hold down another job. As a result, today, with rising tuition, room and board, and other costs, the teaching career is becoming a non-starter for many students.

Student teachers fill crucial gaps in schools, taking on substantial responsibilities that benefit students and staff alike.

The financial investments permitted under the bill will attract the best and most qualified candidates into the profession and acknowledges the value of their contributions. Student teachers who are paid will be better equipped to focus on professional development and best practices than worrying and struggling to make ends meet. This will result in better instruction, learning outcomes, classroom management, and a stronger commitment to their craft. In short, when we invest in our educators, students and teachers benefit. Further, it will allow for a rich and diverse group of candidates by allowing individuals from all socioeconomic backgrounds to pursue teaching, rather than limiting the profession to those who can afford unpaid labor.

The bill also calls on D.E.W. to develop and administer an online annual staffing survey to collect data from each school district and submit an annual report to the General Assembly and the Department of Higher Education to assist in oversight and development of educator preparatory programs.

It also requires that the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services to add the teaching profession to its list of in-demand jobs.

By implementing these changes, we can create a more equitable, accessible, and supportive pathway to the teaching profession. These measures would help address the current teacher shortage, reduce burnout, and ensure that our schools are staffed by dedicated, well-prepared educators.

Investing in student teachers is an investment in the future of our society. When we support those who aspire to teach, we support every child they will educate, every classroom they will lead, and every community they will uplift.

Let us work together to create a system that values and supports our educators from the very beginning of their journey.

Thank you for your careful consideration.

