

House Committees  
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## **Representative Sean Patrick Brennan 14<sup>th</sup> House District**

### **Chair Fowler Arthur, Vice Chair Odioso, and members of the House Education Committee:**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of House Bill 523, the **Future Educators Support Act**. This legislation takes a meaningful step toward strengthening Ohio's educator pipeline and supporting those preparing to enter one of the most important professions in our state.

At its core, this bill is built on a simple idea: **investing in student teachers is investing in the future of education in Ohio**. If we want strong schools, stable classrooms, and student success, we must ensure the next generation of educators is supported—not discouraged—during their preparation.

Ohio, like much of the nation, is facing persistent teacher shortages. Enrollment in teacher preparation programs has declined, and retention challenges continue to strain districts across urban, suburban, and rural communities alike. One of the most significant barriers occurs at the very point students are required to complete full-time, unpaid student teaching.

As many of you know—and as I can personally attest from my own student teaching experience in the early 1990s—student teachers are expected to work full time in classrooms while continuing to pay tuition and manage living expenses. For many aspiring educators, particularly those from working families, this financial burden can be the deciding factor that pushes them out of the profession before they ever begin.

House Bill 523 addresses this challenge in a flexible and responsible way. First, the bill **permits—but does not require—school districts and other public schools to compensate student teachers** at no less than the state minimum wage, which is currently \$10.45 per hour. Schools may also offer healthcare benefits to student teachers under the same terms provided to district staff. This recognizes student teaching for what it truly is: essential, hands-on professional training that directly benefits both schools and students.

Second, to the extent that funds are appropriated, the bill requires the Department of Education and Workforce to provide **cost-of-living stipends**, and the State Board of Education to provide

**test fee reimbursements based on financial need.** Importantly, student teachers may receive both district wages and state assistance simultaneously, ensuring support can be tailored to individual circumstances.

Third, the bill authorizes Ohio's public colleges and universities to establish **reduced tuition or fee waivers during the student teaching period.** This gives institutions flexibility to lower financial barriers while maintaining academic standards.

Together, these provisions create a comprehensive support structure without imposing mandates on local districts or higher education institutions.

House Bill 523 also formally designates teachers as an **in-demand profession** on Ohio's statewide workforce list. This is a critical recognition. Teachers are essential to our workforce development system, our economy, and our communities—and this designation ensures that state workforce planning reflects that reality.

When student teachers are financially supported, they are better positioned to focus on instructional quality, classroom management, and professional growth instead of worrying about how to pay rent or put food on the table. The result is stronger preparation, better classroom outcomes, and a more stable teaching workforce.

Just as importantly, this bill helps expand access to the profession. It opens the door for talented individuals from all socioeconomic backgrounds to pursue teaching—rather than limiting the pipeline to only those who can afford months of unpaid labor.

I am proud to sponsor this legislation alongside my colleague and fellow educator, Representative Gayle Manning. Together, we believe Ohio can lead by example in supporting future educators while respecting local control and fiscal responsibility.

I respectfully ask for your support of House Bill 523. Let's take this opportunity to strengthen Ohio's educator pipeline and reaffirm our commitment to the people who shape our children's futures every day by helping them *stay the course*.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions.