

Chair Fowler Arthur, Vice Chair Odioso, Ranking Member Brennan, and members of the House Education Committee:

Thank you for allowing me to testify today in support of House Bill 523, the Future Educators Support Act. This legislation would be beneficial in retaining educators throughout the state, and showing Ohioans how meaningful the teaching profession is to the state. Today, I would like to share with you my experiences as an education student who has spent the last three years participating in placements, practicums, and now currently, my senior internship.

The University of Cincinnati provides a unique experience for Elementary Education students, as we begin doing classroom practicum as early as the spring of our sophomore year in the program. During this time, we were expected to become a part of a preschool classroom for 12 hours a week, with the only exceptions being a planned seminar from the university, or if the school itself was closed for the day. After practicum was over, I would then go to campus to complete my courses for the day. Throughout the whole semester, I was in the classroom for over 130 hours. Outside of my practicum, I worked 16 hours a week to ensure I had enough to pay for gas to get me to practicum, and to make sure I had groceries. The following semester was similar, though with the expectation of doing 9 hours a week instead of 12. By the end of that semester, I had almost 100 hours in my practicum. After practicum, I continued going to the University of Cincinnati, and then worked shifts at my part-time job once those classes were finished for the day. Most days, I was gone from my dorm from 7:30 in the morning, and was not getting home until closer to 9:00 at night.

For my senior year, I have been at the same school for my fall practicum and my spring internship. I have never been more grateful for this placement, where I have learned so much that I look forward to bringing into my future classroom. This placement, however, requires me to drive 40 miles all together each day. Each week, I am driving 200 miles a week to get to and from my placement. To be able to drive this far, I roughly spend \$50 or more on gas a week. Since the first week of January, I have spent almost \$350 on gas alone. I wholeheartedly believe the drive and the cost of gas is worth attending my placement, but I am consistently worrying if I will have enough money to cover gas, utilities, rent, and groceries each month. This semester, I am at school for almost 8 hours a day, or 40 hours a week. Since beginning my student teaching internship, I have worked almost 300 hours. To be able to afford to come to my placement, and to survive on a day to day basis, I am working a minimum wage evening job. There are some days where I am gone from my apartment for over 14 hours as I go from student teaching to my job.

Being a student teacher is one of the best experiences I have gotten to do, but I am beginning to run into a spot where I can no longer support myself to get through it. By passing House Bill 523, you would be able to support future students that would have to go through situations and

scenarios like myself. Education is such a valuable profession, and this bill would help show future educators that the state values the work that they do. There are many students like myself that struggle to not get burnt-out while also trying to manage covering all necessary bills and costs.

Members of the Education Committee, I respectfully urge you to support House Bill 523. You have the opportunity to show the education profession how you value their work and the time they put into their work. This bill could help support thousands of future educators in finding their footing as they join this amazing profession.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Alice Somers