



**OACTE, OAPCTE, and SUED
Proponent Testimony for HB 523
House Education Committee
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Chair Fowler Arthur, Vice-Chair Odioso, Ranking Member Brennan, and Members of the Ohio House Education Committee,

The Ohio Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (OACTE), a state affiliate of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, represents teacher educators across all of Ohio's public and private institutions. The State University Education Deans (SUED) and the Ohio Association of Private Colleges of Teacher Education (OAPCTE) represent the leadership of all teacher education programs in Ohio. Together, we wish to express support for H.B. 523, co-sponsored by Ranking Member Brennan and Representative Manning. My name is Melissa Askren Edgehouse, and I am here today as President of OAPCTE, and I'm representing OACTE and SUED as well.

OACTE strongly supports the spirit of HB 523 and its goal of strengthening Ohio's educator pipeline by helping teacher candidates remain in Ohio and enter the teaching profession. Ensuring a steady pipeline of well-qualified educators is essential to the success of Ohio's children, schools, and communities.

We strongly support the bill's provisions that provide direct financial assistance to student teachers, including cost-of-living stipends during student teaching and reimbursement of licensure examination fees for candidates with demonstrated financial need.

Student teaching is a full-time, immersive clinical internship that significantly limits candidates' ability to maintain outside employment. Providing stipends and examination fee support will meaningfully reduce financial barriers and broaden access to the profession. As implementation is considered, we encourage careful attention to how these efforts are structured to ensure long-term sustainability for candidates, school districts, and educator preparation programs. Sustaining high-quality clinical experiences requires significant institutional investment, and preserving this capacity will be essential to achieving the long-term goals of the legislation.

Several states, including Kentucky, Michigan, and Pennsylvania, have implemented student teaching stipend programs as part of broader strategies to strengthen recruitment and retention within their educator pipelines. Ohio's consideration of similar measures reflects a thoughtful and proactive approach. Financial support for pre-service teachers during student teaching can facilitate more affordable options so more Ohio students can attend colleges and universities in Ohio to become teachers in Ohio after graduation.

We support the provision permitting school districts to compensate student teachers on an hourly basis and to offer benefits. However, we recognize that most districts may lack the financial capacity to do so without state funding. We encourage continued legislative consideration of future appropriations to ensure that all districts—particularly rural and high-need districts experiencing the most acute teacher shortages—can provide compensation and health benefits to student teachers. Without such support, disparities in local sources may limit the bill's intended impact. Compensation may also serve as an important incentive for candidates to complete their clinical experiences in communities facing the greatest workforce challenges.

Educators are called upon to meet a wide range of academic, social, and emotional needs for their students. Although student teachers are supervised by university faculty through multiple classroom observations and course seminars during their student teaching experience, we ask our newest educators to assume the responsibilities of a full-time teaching role to develop these needed skills. However, due to the realities of housing and food expenses, reliable transportation, the need to purchase appropriate professional attire, and the desire to invest in supplemental instructional materials to design high-quality lessons that effectively meet students' needs, many candidates must also maintain additional employment while continuing to support their families. Despite the time commitments, many candidates across the state find they must work 10, 20, and, in some cases, 30 hours per week in addition to fulfilling their teaching responsibilities. The additional costs of licensure exams, most of which are taken just before or during student teaching, can be a financial strain on students. Content licensure exams range from \$109 to \$139 each, and the pedagogy exam candidates must pass is either \$109 or \$300. All candidates must take and pass a minimum of two exams, and many candidates must pass three or even four exams. Coupled with initial licensure fees, background checks, and fingerprinting, the end of the program is quite costly for student teachers; it costs hundreds of dollars. It's not uncommon for our candidates to ask their families for funding for a licensure exam as a gift for their birthday or for holiday-related gifts.

Balancing these dual responsibilities of student teaching and work, coupled with additional fees to finish the program, often leads to increased stress, reduced sleep, and heightened challenges in an already demanding profession. There are only 24 hours in a day, and the cumulative strain is significant. If we are committed to supporting the health, well-being, and long-term success of our student teachers, we should support HB 523.

In closing, OACTE supports HB 523's goal of reducing financial barriers and strengthening Ohio's teacher pipeline. We respectfully urge the General Assembly to take this important step forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.