



OHIO EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

The OEA will lead the way for continuous improvement of public education while advocating for members and the learners they serve.

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Ohio House Education Committee House Bill 523 – Proponent Testimony February 24, 2026

Good afternoon Chair Fowler-Arthur, Ranking Member Brennan, and members of the Ohio House Education Committee. On behalf of the Ohio Education Association (OEA) and its nearly 120,000 members, my name is Jeff Wensing. I am a math teacher from Parma City Schools with 32 years of service and currently serving as President of the OEA. Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 523, the “Future Educators Support Act.”

OEA recommends passage of the “Future Educators Support Act” because it is time for Ohio to join the growing movement of state support for paying student teachers!

More states are recognizing that teacher shortages shortchange everyone, not just students. The “Future Educators Support Act” will help Ohio stay competitive with surrounding states when it comes to supporting aspiring educators to get trained, licensed, and into classrooms so we can reduce teacher shortages and provide all students a high-quality education, no matter what zip code they live in.

HB 523 allows the Ohio General Assembly to create multiple avenues of potential support for aspiring educators while student teaching, including support from school districts, the Department of Education and Workforce (DEW), the State Board of Education, state institutions of higher education, and the Department of Jobs and Family Services (DJFS). This support will help keep Ohio on the right track when it comes to staying competitive in attracting and growing the future educators our economies need to prepare students for citizenship and the workforce.

First, the bill allows school districts to support aspiring educators by paying student teachers an hourly wage, as well as offering coverage under the district’s health care plan. Many aspiring educators face a financial challenge when student-teaching without pay for an extended academic period, such as a semester or more, depending on program requirements. Unpaid student teaching can be a significant barrier to entering the profession for any individual, but tends to disproportionately impact younger students from low-income backgrounds and older students seeking to transition into a career in education. This is of particular concern when considering individuals from these backgrounds are primary areas of recruitment to grow the teaching profession and reduce shortages.



Second, the bill allows the Department of Education and the Workforce to support student teachers by offering cost-of-living stipends if the Ohio General Assembly provides the funds. A student teacher would be eligible for a cost-of-living stipend in addition to an hourly wage, if both are available.

Third, the bill allows the State Board of Education to support aspiring educators by providing licensure test fee relief based on economic need, to the extent funded by the Ohio General Assembly. The cumulative cost of teacher license test fees in Ohio typically ranges from \$450 to \$800 for the essential applications, exams, and background checks. These costs can be prohibitive for many students.

Fourth, the bill allows state institutions of higher education to offer aspiring educators tuition relief during their off-campus training period as student teachers, either through waivers or other differentials in tuition and fee charges.

Finally, the bill adds teachers to Ohio's list of "in-demand" jobs eligible for development of recruitment and retention incentive programs supported by the Department of Job and Family Services. Including teaching as an "in-demand" job reflects the growing use of alternative recruiting and training models, such as apprenticeships that allow paraprofessional classroom assistants to participate in training programs that lead to being licensed as a classroom teacher.

Taken together, the proposals in HB 523 will help keep Ohio in the game when it comes to supporting aspiring educators to fulfill their dreams of public service. Building a support system for future educators is a smart investment and points Ohio in the right direction when compared with significant steps already being taken by other states. For example, the Pennsylvania Student Teacher Support Program provides \$10,000 stipends to eligible aspiring educators while they perform their full-time student teaching experience. Included for your reference is a list of significant actions being taken in other states to support aspiring educators.

In closing, the "Support Future Educators Act" will set Ohio on a stronger course towards making Ohio a leader in supporting aspiring educators as they become highly trained and dedicated classroom teachers. Thank you for your consideration and I am available for any questions you may have.

WHAT ARE OTHER STATES DOING TO SUPPORT ASPIRING EDUCATORS?

- **Maryland:** The Educator Shortage Act provides a \$20,000 yearly stipend to eligible student teachers to address the state's teacher shortage. To qualify for the stipend, students must be enrolled in a teacher preparatory program and commit to work two years in a high-needs school in Maryland.
- **Michigan:** The MI Future Educator Stipend provides \$9,600 to our future educators who are participating in their required student teaching semester.

- **Colorado:** The student educator stipend program awards money to an eligible student to compensate them for their clinical experience in an academic residency position. Candidates placed in a 16-week academic residency may receive a stipend of up to \$11,000, and those in a 32-week academic residency may receive a stipend of up to \$22,000.
- **Pennsylvania:** The Student Teacher Support Program provides \$10,000 stipends to eligible aspiring educators while they perform their full-time student teaching experience. The eligible student teachers, in turn, agree to work as teachers at schools within Pennsylvania for at least three years.
- **Utah:** Stipends for Future Educators provides state funding as financial assistance to Utah university/college students completing their student teaching in a Utah public school. The stipend is an award of up to \$6,000 per student teacher. Funding is currently available only for the 2024-25 academic year.
- **Kentucky:** In Kentucky, legislation was passed to pay Kentucky residents in student teaching a \$5,000 stipend.
- **California:** The Golden State Teacher Grant (GSTG) Program awards up to \$20,000 to students currently enrolled in a professional preparation program approved by the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) and working towards earning their preliminary teaching or pupil personnel services credential.