

HB 523 Testimony

Emma Walz- Avon Lake Resident (44012); Ashland University Student: As a non-traditional student going into teaching as a second career, I am one of the few who can support myself without loans during my education. I am very aware of how lucky I am in this regard and cannot imagine having to work or worry about loans during my student teaching. When I saw the bill for my semester of student teaching (\$9,564.00) I was floored. Ten thousand dollars for one semester to do the work of a paid professional! If I did not have the savings and family support that I have, that semester alone would make me reconsider my path as a teacher. For students without this support, this fiscal burden comes at a time in their education where the only way out is to swell in debt, take a massive hit to savings account, or change career paths.

Furthermore, the amount of work required in student teaching leaves little room to work a paying job. For me, nights and weekends are used to grapple with grading, planning, and creating assessments and materials. If I was working a job on top of student teaching there would simply be no time left for me to truly dig into the experience of student teaching in a meaningful way. The fiscal burden of college debt turns away prospective students who would otherwise make fantastic candidates. Allowing paid student teaching and lessening debt would allow for a more diverse pool of aspiring educators and therefore a more diverse pool of teachers in the public school systems of Ohio, something that is not only beneficial but vital to the well rounded education of our young citizens. I am in no way a financial guru, but I believe the state has a myriad of ways to tackle this problem. The most desirable outcome would be an hourly wage for student teachers of at least minimum wage in order to help students who would otherwise have no way to support themselves during their student teaching. This should be the top priority. However, if a wage style payment could not be reached, grants, scholarships, and funds could be set aside to support those who, without help, could not support themselves while student teaching. With this barrier removed, the diversity of aspiring educators can expand, leading to a more diverse workforces and more diverse experiences for our public school students. Moreover, the effects of a healthier, more motivated, and better educated group of incoming teachers will be felt for generations. Without the stress of unpaid student teaching, aspiring educators can hone their craft and the craft of every educator they interact with thereafter. Teaching is a community career and the stronger each individual is, the stronger the system becomes.