

Emily Legenza- Akron Resident (44310); Current Educator: I was a student teacher from January - March of 2020. Going into my placement, **I was so incredibly ready to get into a school and start working**; the **school I was placed at was a 50-minute drive away**. I was still considered a college student, so I was locked into housing for an entire year. **I woke up at 5 am and returned home at around 7 pm**- as a music educator, we are responsible for musical practices after school as well. I came home and **almost immediately went to bed every day. I had no time or energy for an outside job to help cover gas expenses or my housing**. I was **struggling**, yet **getting through by the skin of my teeth. I didn't know if I could mentally and physically keep going**, but I was so determined to be a good teacher. Going to my placement was excellent. My mentor teacher was a genius, and I learned a lot from him. Little did we know, COVID-19 would shut us down in the first week of March and all of a sudden I was being told I **might not be able to graduate** if I **didn't fulfill my hours**, and I **would possibly have to pay for ANOTHER semester of student teaching**. It was an **impossible situation**. Luckily, that did NOT happen, **but it made me hyper-aware of the struggles that so many of us teachers go through during student teaching. I truly did not have any income during the time I worked as a student teacher, and I struggled mentally. I was still required to work digitally from home, but I had to move back in with my parents due to financial problems** and family sickness. Student teachers have struggled with personal, mental health, and financial problems for decades. **I don't wish what I went through on anyone**, but we are **continuing a vicious cycle of college students wracking up debt before they enter the workforce**. For anyone like me who has extraneous circumstances, **it really can make or break a person**. I am so thankful I have a family who supported me, but what happens to those who don't have that?