

My name is Aliyah Tipton-Whittaker. I am a fourth year early childhood education major at Kent State University. I am currently a student teacher, and I will graduate in May. I have had wonderful experiences at my student teaching placement, however more recently, I have struggled with finances. Prior to student teaching I worked at the daycare on campus around my class schedule. Unfortunately, I had to leave my position as it does not align with the hours I spend teaching. I am at my placement Monday through Friday where I have completely taken over teaching responsibilities without compensation. I currently do not have an income, and am living off money I have set aside in my savings and have been fortunate to receive some in scholarships. The money I have set aside goes to several outlets such as rent, groceries, gas, and professional clothing. Additionally, I pay full tuition for the semester, although I do not attend classes on campus. I am currently enrolled in one online course in addition to student teaching for the full tuition price. With House Bill 523, districts will have the option to offer pay and provide benefits to student teachers. This is a great first step, however, the bill does include permissive language without a mandate. It is only an option, which means that while some student teachers will receive pay, others will still be without any form of compensation. In surrounding states such as Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Kentucky paid student teaching is funded through state government instead of the cost falling upon districts. Funding paid student teaching at the state level would equalize the opportunity for student teachers, regardless of the district they are assigned. The current language may create a disparity among those districts that do not have it in their budget to pay student teachers. While I have my disagreements with the bill, I am thankful that the work we do as educators is being recognized and paid student teaching is being taken into further consideration.