

Student Teaching Testimony - Lettie Friona

My name is Lettie Friona, and I am currently a third-year student in a teacher preparation program at Kent State University in Kent, OH. I am starting observations and will be a full-time, official student teacher next school year, my senior year. I am currently navigating how I will work full-time as a student teacher, Monday through Friday, take classes, and sustain enough money to live in Kent. I know that if I had gone to college in another state, like PA or MI, I would not have this dilemma.

As I organize details for the following year, I am preparing to work two jobs and have an additional income (3 total forms of income) this summer, in order to have enough savings to last me through my senior year. Despite this, I do not think I will have a sustainable amount of money. Throughout next school year, I am going to keep one of those jobs, in addition to student teaching, likely taking me to 55-65 hours a week working (including student teaching).

There are a multitude of factors for me to consider as I am making these decisions. Firstly, I am unsure of what I will find when I enter student teaching. *What if I have to handle a lot of the work of the class? What if I am expected to have Monday-Friday lesson plans every single week? When will I have time to plan these, particularly plan them effectively, during such a busy schedule?* Student teaching often requires these strong commitments, close to or equivalent to a paid teacher. If we care about the state of education and the education our children are receiving, it is not radical to suggest there should be more encouraging frameworks in place to support student teachers. Furthermore, is this schedule even sustainable for me as a whole person? Will I have time to sleep and enjoy the things I do in my spare time? *Does anyone even concern themselves with my well-being outside of getting tasks done?*

These questions enter my mind often as an education major in Ohio. I know that it would be a lot easier for me if I had entered a different major or program as well. I have plenty of interests, I could have done well in another field. This weighs on me heavily. I feel that I have a vocation for teaching, but every day it becomes disheartening to follow this desire. I know I will be working many, tireless hours with no appropriate compensation. Other fields, majors and trades do not have these shared experiences. I have connections with many people, who all have paid for internships in college. Why can't we get paid for the work we do?

I personally think the lack of compensation in teacher preparation programs represents a broader reflection of how we view teaching and education in Ohio. If we want to encourage students to become excited, high-quality educators, we have to recognize their hard work as legitimate. If we want to address teacher shortages and strengthen the quality of our education in Ohio, we must make teacher education programs sustainable. Allowing the Future Educators Support Act to be enacted would be a step in that direction. Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony.