

Proponent Testimony for H.B. No. 523
Education Committee
Tuesday, February 24, 2026
Mr. Ivory L. Kennedy Jr., M.Ed.

Chair Arthur-Fowler, Vice Chair Odioso, Ranking Member Brennan, and members of the Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 523, the Future Educators Support Act.

Becoming a teacher in Ohio should be rigorous. It should be demanding. But it should not be financially burdensome.

Education is one of the most important services we provide as a state, yet the path to entering the profession often requires student teachers to work full time in classrooms without pay while also absorbing additional costs for licensure exams, application fees, and credentialing. By the time a candidate completes the process, they may have paid hundreds of dollars beyond tuition simply to test and apply for their initial license.

- Pre-Service Teacher Permit (1-Year) | **\$25**
- Pre-Service Teacher Permit (3-Year) | **\$75**
- **Ohio Assessment for Educators**
 - **Reading Foundations \$139**
 - **Professional Knowledge \$109**
 - **Content Area 1 - \$109**
 - **Content Area 2 - \$109**
- Resident Educator License (2-Year) | **\$80**

Having gone through this journey myself, I can speak firsthand to the financial strain that accompanies the student teaching semester. During that period, candidates are not part-time observers. They are teaching, planning, grading, and serving students daily. At the very moment when they are contributing the most, they are often earning the least.

This bill recognizes that student teaching is work. Providing stipends, allowing districts to compensate candidates, reducing tuition during field experiences, and designating teaching as an in-demand profession sends a clear message that Ohio values the educator pipeline.

As new revenue streams emerge in our state, we should be asking how we reinvest in critical workforce areas like education. Making the pathway into teaching more affordable is not a handout. It is a strategic investment in Ohio's future classrooms, communities, and economy.

Some generations had to navigate these financial hurdles without support. But good policy evolves. If this legislation allows future educators to focus more on mastering their craft and less on surviving financially, that is progress.

I respectfully urge the committee to support the bipartisan House Bill 523 and make becoming an educator in Ohio not a financial obstacle, but a supported and sustainable journey.

Thank you for your time.