Interested Party Testimony: Sub HB 523
House Education Committee

Tuesday, May 19, 2026
Dr. Christina Collins, Executive Director
Honesty for Ohio Education

Chair Fowler Arthur, Vice Chair Odioso, Ranking Member Brennan, and members of the House Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Substitute House Bill 523 (Sub HB 523). My name is Dr. Christina Collins, and I serve as the Executive Director of Honesty for Ohio Education. We are a statewide, nonpartisan coalition dedicated to ensuring that every child in Ohio has access to a high-quality, inclusive, and honest education.

Until today, we have been vocal, eager supporters of HB 523. It is with great sadness, therefore, that I feel obligated to testify as an interested party today.

As Ranking Member Brennan stated in his sponsor testimony, Ohio is facing a serious teacher shortage. "Enrollment in teacher preparation programs has declined, and retention challenges continue to strain districts across urban, suburban, and rural communities alike. One of the most significant barriers occurs at the very point students are required to complete full-time, unpaid student teaching."

As Representative Manning stated in her sponsor testimony, many of Ohio's student teachers are "working one or two more jobs on top of their student teaching responsibilities just to make ends meet. She further noted that "for many aspiring educators, particularly those from working families, this financial burden can be the deciding factor that pushes them out of the profession before they ever begin."

Under the substitute bill expected to be adopted today, nearly all of the most important support measures provided under the original bill to address these issues would be removed.

- Public schools would not be given the option to pay student teachers minimum wage or higher;
- Public schools would not be given the option to offer healthcare to student teachers;
- DEW would not be required to provide a cost-of-living stipend to student teachers with financial need if the legislature appropriates funds;

- The State Board of Education would not be required to provide test-fee reimbursements to student teachers with financial need if the state appropriates funds; and,
- The Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) would not be required to add teachers to the list of Ohio in-demand jobs.

Instead, school districts could choose to pay student teachers “a stipend in an amount determined by the school.” While this would be a small step forward, there is no guarantee that such a stipend would be enough to allow any additional Ohioans to overcome financial barriers and serve as student teachers.

Under the sub bill, public colleges and universities could also choose to establish a lower differential tuition rate for students who are working as student teachers or participating in teacher prep field experience. While this too is a small step forward, it would likely keep student teaching out of reach for many students who simply cannot afford to work without pay on their journey to becoming an educator.

Finally, the substitute bill would require ODJFS to create a new list of in-demand teaching jobs in Ohio, post that list on their websites, and update it periodically. We would be curious to hear more about the rationale behind this change, and request that this section be amended to ensure the list is updated often enough to ensure its utility.

In addition to the removal of so many critically important pieces of the original HB 523, the substitute bill would add language banning student teachers from “collectively bargaining with the student teacher’s employer unless the employer elects to do so.” This anti-worker language is wholly unnecessary, harmful, and does not line up with the sentiment of the original bill.

Given these significant changes, Honesty For Ohio Education can no longer actively support HB 523 if the substitute bill is adopted and will be forced to consider switching to opponent testimony for future hearings.

We strongly urge the committee to return HB 523 to its original form before it moves any further.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration of this testimony.