Proponent Testimony for H.B. No. 523
Ohio House Education Committee
Tuesday, May 19, 2026
Mr. Ivory L. Kennedy Jr., M.Ed.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 523, the Future Educators Support Act.

I support this bill not only because future educators need financial support, but because this moment demands that we think more deeply about what it means to prepare teachers in the state of Ohio.

Student teaching is transformative work. It is one of the most important periods in the development of an educator. Future teachers are not simply completing assignments or observing classrooms. They are learning how to shape minds, support children, navigate differences, and prepare the next generation of Ohioans for participation in society. That responsibility deserves support.

Financially, yes. But also, intellectually and morally. As someone who has gone through the process personally, I understand the burden many future educators face. Student teachers are often working full time in classrooms while simultaneously dealing with rising living costs, transportation expenses, licensure fees, testing fees, and the overall financial strain of surviving college. At a time when gas prices alone can approach five dollars a gallon, we have to ask ourselves honestly: are we creating a pathway that invites people into education, or one that pushes them away from it?

This bill is a meaningful step toward addressing that reality. But I also believe this conversation must go beyond finances. We cannot discuss supporting future educators without discussing the climate surrounding education itself. We cannot claim to value teachers while public education, historical literacy, and honest engagement with American history are increasingly politicized and attacked.

And I say this directly. When elected officials, including Representative Gary Click and supporters of SB1, invoke the words of Martin Luther King Jr. while simultaneously supporting efforts that restrict honest conversations around history, inequity, and the lived experiences of people in this country, future educators notice that contradiction.

Student teachers notice it. Young people notice it.

Dr. King did not fight for a sanitized version of history. He fought for truth, humanity, dignity, and the expansion of democracy. If we are serious about preparing future educators, then we should want them entering classrooms with historical literacy, empathy, curiosity, and the ability to engage students from all walks of life with honesty and care. Because the question before us is larger than whether student teachers deserve stipends.

The real question is this:

Do we want future educators struggling financially and morally just to enter classrooms that are increasingly under attack? Is that the direction we want for education in Ohio? Or do we want to build a state that genuinely values teachers, supports them, prepares them well, and trusts them with the responsibility of educating the future?

I believe House Bill 523 is a step toward the better version of that future, and I respectfully urge its support.

Thank you for your time.