INTERESTED PARTY TESTIMONY — HOUSE BILL 523

(Future Educators Support Act — Substitute Bill)

Ohio House Education Committee

May 18, 2026

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. I am submitting this testimony as an *Interested Party* on House Bill 523.

I want to begin by thanking Representatives Brennan and Manning — two retired educators — for introducing the original Future Educators Support Act. **As introduced, HB 523 was one of the most concrete, practical, and genuinely bipartisan responses this committee has seen to Ohio's teacher shortage.** It said something simple and important: if we want more Ohioans to become teachers, we have to stop forcing them to work for free, pay tuition for the privilege, and go without healthcare during one of the most demanding training experiences of their professional lives.

I am here today, as an Interested Party, because I am deeply concerned about the substitute version of HB 523 that this committee may adopt at this hearing. **The substitute keeps the bill's name. It strips out the bill.**

Consider what the substitute would remove from the version originally introduced:

- The ability for districts to pay student teachers at least minimum wage — replaced with permission to pay "a stipend in an amount determined by the school," which can be any amount, including zero
- The ability for districts to offer student teachers healthcare similar to other district staff — removed entirely
- The requirement that the state provide a cost-of-living stipend to student teachers with demonstrated financial need, if the legislature appropriates funds
- The requirement that the State Board of Education reimburse test fees for student teachers with financial need, if the legislature appropriates funds
- The straightforward act of adding "teacher" to Ohio's existing in-demand jobs list at the Department of Job and Family Services — replaced with a separate, lower-visibility list ODJFS would update only "periodically"
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In the place of all of that, the substitute adds something that was not in the original bill: **a provision that would prohibit student teachers from collectively bargaining with their employer unless the employer affirmatively elects to allow it.** The original bill was about supporting future teachers. This new provision is about restricting them. It is difficult to imagine a more direct way to tell young Ohioans considering teaching as a career that the state does not see them as workers worthy of basic labor protections.

Let me be honest with this committee about what student teaching actually looks like for many Ohioans right now. **Student teachers are required, by their universities and by the state, to teach a full classroom load for an entire semester — sometimes longer — under the supervision of a licensed educator.** They cannot hold a typical outside job during this period.

They are full-time, unpaid, in-person workers — and they are most often students who are simultaneously paying tuition to their university for the privilege of doing the work. For students from low-income families, for first-generation college students, for parents of young children, and for the second-career professionals Ohio desperately needs to attract back into teaching, the unpaid student-teaching semester is often the moment the dream of teaching ends. They cannot afford to do it.

The original HB 523 was a meaningful, bipartisan, and fiscally serious response to that reality. **The substitute version is, with respect, a press release.** It will allow the General Assembly to claim it has acted on the teacher shortage without guaranteeing a single dollar of pay, providing a single hour of healthcare, funding a single test-fee reimbursement, or moving "teacher" a single line up on Ohio's in-demand jobs list. It will also leave Ohio's student teachers — already among the most financially vulnerable workers in our education system — with fewer rights than they had before this bill was introduced.

Ohio has a documented teacher shortage. The original HB 523 took it seriously. The substitute does not. **This committee cannot solve the teacher pipeline crisis by passing a bill whose only operative provisions are "districts may, if they wish" and "universities may, if they wish."** Districts and universities already may. They have for years. The reason future teachers are still walking away is that "may" is not a paycheck and "may" is not health insurance.

I respectfully ask this committee to take one of the following actions before any vote on HB 523:

1. Reject the substitute version of HB 523 and return to the original Future Educators Support Act, as introduced by Representatives Brennan and Manning; or
2. At minimum, restore the four core provisions of the original bill: (a) minimum-wage authority for student-teacher pay; (b) the option for districts to offer healthcare to student teachers; (c) the state-funded cost-of-living stipend and test-fee reimbursements for student teachers with demonstrated financial need; and (d) inclusion of "teacher" on Ohio's existing in-demand jobs list, not on a separate list updated "periodically."
3. Strike the new provision prohibiting collective bargaining by student teachers. That language has no place in a bill meant to support future educators.

Ohio's student teachers are not asking for special treatment. They are asking to be paid for the work they do, to have a path to healthcare while they do it, and to enter the profession without crushing personal debt. **The original HB 523 answered that ask. I urge this committee to do the same.**

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully submitted,

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