

Fort Frye Local School District



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Chair Manning, Vice Chair Bird, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today regarding House Bill (HB) 583. I am Lindsey Morgenstern, a parent and proud substitute teacher in Fort Frye Local Schools. I am here today to testify in support of HB 583.

Because of the flexibility provided in Senate Bill 1, I have been substitute teaching for my local district since December 2021. I receive daily calls to fill teaching positions in our K-12 buildings because the list of names on our board-approved substitute teacher list is ever-decreasing. Fort Frye has experienced staffing shortages for substitutes in all positions, and the pandemic has only made this worse as help wanted signs are splattered across our communities. Through HB 583, I would meet the qualifications to continue providing substitute services to my district.

What does a shortage of substitute teachers look like in Fort Frye? In our high school, classes with no teachers are sometimes combined into study hall with no direct instruction for those classes. Already stressed-out teachers are pulled from their planning periods to cover classes. Clearly this is adding to our teacher-burn out. Principals are leaving their assigned duties to cover classes as a result of this shortage, not able to address their administrative duties. Support teachers who provide special programs for kids sometimes are pulled to cover core classes, which cancels needed services. Classes are also combined where possible with one teacher instructing both. If the absence of the regular teacher is due to a professional training, the trainings may get canceled or a particular teacher may not be able to attend because she has to be pulled back to the classroom due to a lack of substitutes; therefore, some are not receiving important training.

I am happy to help our schools in any way that I can, knowing that I do not have a teaching degree, but that I am definitely able to provide a safe and temporary learning and social-emotional experience for our students. I wonder if some legislators question extending HB 583 for substitute credentialing because they are rightfully concerned that local districts are literally pulling people off the street to cover classes. This is definitely not the case.

What does it look like to put someone like me in the classroom as a substitute teacher? During my days of substitute teaching, I have helped primary students learn and apply phonetic decoding skills. We utilized a research-based program that the teacher had left the instructions for related to phonemic awareness lessons. I retaught middle schoolers how to solve algebraic equations and apply the order of operations for computation. I helped some students with disabilities brainstorm creative writing prompts and complete their journal writing tasks. In an upperclassmen course at Fort Frye High

School, the regular teacher had pre-loaded all the course materials on Google Classroom so I circulated around the room helping kiddos stay on task and answering questions. I have also supported students who just needed extra attention and care because their days were not going as planned.

There are many, many more examples that I could provide this committee, but I hope that I have already painted a picture of how important my availability to substitute is to the school system and the children. I also hope you realize that myself and others can be more than qualified to fill these temporary educational roles in safe environment. Please trust individual school systems, who likely personally know many of these potential candidates they are recruiting, to vet potential substitute teachers and have this flexibility.

With HB 583, this benefit is possible in hundreds of classrooms every single day and for several years to come as our state works through this workforce shortage. Without people like me, education is going to continue to be lost, and we have already had enough of that with the pandemic.

Thank you Representatives Bird and Jones for sponsoring HB 583. I cannot express how important it is to have this bill become law before the 22-23 school year begins. I urge you to approve HB 583.

Thank you for your time and attention. I am happy to answer any questions committee members might have at this time.