



Achieving Together

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 Mark Trace, Deputy Superintendent of Whitehall City Schools. I am here today to testify in support of HB 583.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic was ever introduced into our daily lives, finding a sufficient amount of substitute teachers for our school district was a struggle. Sadly, this has been the case in the last 20 years or so. The COVID-19 pandemic did us no favors in terms of improving our retention rate for substitutes. In fact, it crippled our efforts much like most other school districts.

Like all good school districts in our state, we fought back and got creative on how we attempted to provide adequate instruction with a less-than-sufficient amount of staff. We used administrators and central office staff members to sub, we had teachers give up their planning periods to cover other classrooms, and we even gave up specials so those teachers could sub in regular classrooms. None of these situations were close to ideal, and in doing so, we gave up a lot in areas that our students and staff members depend on for stability and normalcy.

I grow increasingly worried that, while we are inching closer to an end of this pandemic, our struggles to find quality substitutes for our classrooms will continue and possibly become even more problematic. We've been very fortunate to not have to close any buildings on a given day due to lack of substitutes. However, if this problem becomes more desperate, that will become a harsh reality for us on possibly a monthly or even weekly basis.

I would like to thank representatives Bird and Jones for sponsoring the bill and all the efforts that go along with making this bill into law for the 2022-2023 school year.

I implore you to vote in support of HB 583. I am confident that I speak for the great majority of school districts in our great state when I say we need your voice to become ours. I trust that you will hear our plea for help on this very important matter.

Sincerely,

Mark Trace  
Deputy Superintendent  
Whitehall City Schools

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