

February 4, 2022

The Honorable Hodan Hassan  
531 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
St Paul, MN 55155



Dear Rep Hassan,

MSBA appreciates your efforts to address the substitute teacher deficit in the state by authoring HF 2950. We believe this is a step in the right direction; however, we believe it doesn't go far enough to address the issue. MSBA sincerely believes each school district should have the authority to hire short-call substitute teachers and then notify the Professional Educators Licensing Standards Board (PELSB) of the hire.

Minnesota is facing a substitute teacher shortage, as is much of the rest of the United States. This shortage began years before the pandemic; however, the pandemic has brought to this staffing issue to the forefront because of quarantining requirements and other health and safety protocols.

In the 2021 legislative session, a bill providing additional flexibility for hiring substitute teachers was heard in both the House and the Senate. Testimony from education leaders across Minnesota confirmed the shortage has reached a crisis. The Anoka Hennepin school district testified it had a shortage of 100 subs in one month alone! And another district calculated 12.9% of the entire school year went without teachers or substitutes in a classroom. Over 30 percent of short call substitute spots in a northwestern district went unfilled.

In acts of desperation, Minnesota school districts have scrambled and become creative in looking for solutions. For example, one district left a voicemail recruiting parents to get licensed, another district using federal relief funds, offered 11 new full-time substitute positions to be paid \$180 per day, while another's has increased substitute pay. The result is today, our schools are still experiencing a significant lack of substitute teachers.

Schools in other states have already taken action to address shortages. North Dakota changed their 10-day restriction to 30 days for some interim substitute licenses. In South Dakota, the hiring of substitutes teachers is handled by each school district. The requirements in South Dakota are for the candidate to be 18-years of age and pass a criminal background check. Governors and education agency leaders in Iowa, Missouri and Nevada have stopped requiring substitute teachers to have earned at least 60 hours of college credits or an associate degree. In Connecticut, substitutes no longer need a bachelor's degree, and in New York, a teaching degree is no longer needed.

COVID-19 has certainly exacerbated the issue; but the reality is that there are not enough subs to staff our classrooms. Administration scrambles when this is the case: teachers lose their prep to cover classrooms, classrooms are split up and moved to other classrooms causing yet another disruption to student learning. Not to mention increasing costs, both financial and time.

Substitute costs can be covered by ESSER (one-time relief funding), however if there is no pool of substitutes, the money does no good. As we look at the history of the problem, as well as out into the future, it is highly likely the situation will not self-correct.

Staffing a school with teachers is a minimum expectation in an educational system. This shortage has created instability in delivering a high-quality education for all students. Some states have had to close schools or shifted students into a larger classroom because of shortages. To help resolve this crisis and avoid these unfortunate measures, this resolution suggests some short-term and long-term solutions presented by several school districts.

To address the short-term solutions, there are paras, coaches, parent volunteers and other members of the community who do not have the four-year degree required but are familiar with the school's students and staff as well as its values and routines. The local school district can find the best candidates and providing the necessary training and evaluation to be an effective short-term substitute teacher. In addressing the long-term solutions, the State needs to fully fund the operating and staffing costs of the schools.

MSBA recently passed a resolution 107-6 at its Delegate Assembly:

**MSBA URGES THE LEGISLATURE TO SUPPORT POLICIES THAT WILL ADDRESS THE SHORTAGE OF REGULARLY LICENSED, SHORT-CALL SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS BY REDUCING BARRIERS TO LICENSING AND HIRING PRACTICES AS WELL AS**

**INCREASING RETENTION STRATEGIES, SUCH AS:**

- **ALLOWING NON-LICENSED INDIVIDUAL WITH A BACHELOR'S DEGREE TO APPLY AND BE HIRED BY A DISTRICT, WITH NOTIFICATION TO PELS, FOR A SHORT-CALL SUBSTITUTE LICENSE;**
- **ALLOWING LOCAL DISTRICTS TO HIRE CANDIDATES WITH AN ASSOCIATE ARTS (AA) DEGREE AND NOTIFICATION TO PELS, FOR A SHORT-CALL SUBSTITUTE LICENSE;**
- **ALLOWING LOCAL DISTRICTS TO HIRE A COLLEGE STUDENT WHO IS ACCEPTED AND ENROLLED IN A TEACHER PREP PROGRAM FOR AT LEAST TWO YEARS, WITH NOTIFICATION TO PELS, FOR A SHORT-CALL SUBSTITUTE;**
- **SUPPORTING LOCALLY DEVELOPED, RESEARCH BASED, PROGRAMS TO RECRUIT, TRAIN, AND DEVELOP SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS; OR**
- **INCREASING EDUCATION FUNDING TO PROVIDE COMPETITIVE COMPENSATION PACKAGES.**
- **CANDIDATES MUST COMPLETE ALL DISTRICT APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS, FEES AND BACKGROUND CHECKS PRIOR BEGINING WORK AS A SUBSTITUTE TEACHER.**

Respectfully,

Minnesota School Boards Association