

Minnesota Association of Colleges for Teacher Education

Dr. Cari Maguire, President
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Laura Mogelson, Legislative Liaison
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Dear Chair Yoakim and members of the House Education Finance Committee,

We are writing today to share our strong support for the provision in **HF 2497** that provides **funds to pay student teachers**. This provision would provide a much needed move from student teaching as an unpaid requirement to student teaching as a valued professional internship.

There is no debate about the value and necessity of the student teaching experience. Student teaching allows a teacher candidate to synthesize the learning from their teacher preparation program, connect theory to practice, and hone the complex skill set needed to be a successful teacher. The opportunity for significant mentorship from teachers and teacher educators is invaluable, and new teachers regularly report student teaching as the most valuable learning in their preparation.

However, pre-service student teaching has always been an unpaid requirement. The Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB) requires a minimum 12-week student teaching experience. Many programs require more than twelve weeks.

Being required to work full-time for several months without pay creates a barrier to teacher licensure that many cannot overcome. Many interested prospective teachers decide against pursuing teaching as a career when they find out they will need to work for several months with no income. In addition, we often see candidates who are enrolled and making successful progress drop out of programs when their student teaching semester arrives because they simply cannot afford to live for three or more months without pay. Those who complete the student teaching experience often take out additional loans to cover the cost of living expenses, increasing their debt burden for years to come.

The unpaid student teaching experience limits the backgrounds from which teachers can come, favoring those with more resources. This, in turn, contributes to the lack of diversity in our teacher workforce. This is why paid student teaching is an important provision of the Increase Teachers of Color Act, proposed legislation with many policy and funding provisions which we also strongly support and recommend fully funding.

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Candidates often need to work part-time during their full-time student teaching, which creates such stress that their development as teachers is negatively affected. Candidates report food and housing insecurities, and often turn to food shelves at this point in their programs. This is especially concerning because research demonstrates that the quality of the student teaching experience significantly impacts the effectiveness of new teachers. When teacher candidates are holding down multiple jobs, working 60+ hours a week, and struggling with stress and anxiety, their professional development and future effectiveness are negatively impacted.

The unpaid model is based on an outdated conception of teacher education in which teachers complete student teaching in their final year of full-time college study while being supported by their parents. This is not the reality for the vast majority of teacher candidates currently working toward licensure today. Three months of unpaid work undervalues the teaching profession as a whole, signaling to many teachers that they are expected to suffer to enter this profession.

Removing the barrier of unpaid student teaching will help us solve the teacher shortage, while also opening the teaching profession to a more diverse candidate pool. We urge you to support the funding of paid student teaching in HF 2497.

Sincerely,

Caroline Maguire, MACTE President, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities
Darrell Stolle, MACTE President-Elect, Concordia College, Moorhead

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