

Introduction

Thank you Madam Chair and Committee Members.

My name is Kristin Dehmer, I am the Executive Director of Human Resources and Operations for the Moorhead Area Public School district. I am speaking today in support of HF 2950, specifically to the short-call substitute language, as a school administrator, but also with the support of MASPA, MSBA, MREA, and AMSD, in order to change requirements for substitute teachers and provide some flexibility and relief to school districts, teachers, and students.

Moorhead is a rural district that sits on the border of Minnesota and North Dakota, and is considered to be part of a three-city metro area of Fargo, West Fargo, and Moorhead. While Moorhead has a population of approximately 44,000 people, the metro area has a population of 200,000 people with people living and working in both Minnesota and North Dakota.

Moorhead’s current student population is approximately 7,100 and we employ 1300 permanent and substitute employees, with 46%, of those employees licensed teaching staff.

Districts have seen a significant substitute shortage over the last few years, in Fargo/Moorhead, this has been exacerbated due to a low unemployment rate, good economic development and significant increases in student enrollment. Increased enrollment is a positive result of the community growth, but creates a strain on the availability of licensed teachers, which affects the pool of individuals who have typically been employed in substitute positions. We have also seen a general decrease in applicants for teaching positions, and also know that we are seeing fewer students entering the teaching profession.

Moorhead Data

Teacher Specific Sub Totals					
Average Subs Per Day - 59		Average Subs Down Per Day - 29		Average Subs Needed Per Day - 88	
Highest - 80	Lowest - 29	Highest - 69	Lowest - 1	Highest - 142	Lowest - 33

Highest Fill Rate: 95% (Sept)    Lowest Fill Rate: 50% (January)    Average Fill Rate: 69%

What does the lowest fill rate look like in actual openings? (134 openings/68 Filled/66 Unfilled)

What happens when we do not have enough substitute teachers?

1. Students do not receive services– this may include special education, English Language Instruction, and supporting services in reading and math for those needing additional help.
2. Splitting one class of students among other classes.
3. Doubling of classes (1 teacher takes 2 classes regardless of grade or subject).
4. Large group supervision- placing students in cafeterias or theater spaces with 1 or 2 supervising adults;

5. Teachers miss contractual preparation periods, lunch times, and administrators are in the classroom subbing rather than being available to help students, staff, and parents/guardians.

In addition, we have a unique challenge on the border of ND/MN as we are competing for the same licensed and short call substitutes, however, in ND, the requirements for a substitute license are less and in line with the bill presented today:

- Official transcript documenting a minimum of 48 semester hours of college coursework;
- Successful background check completed with ESPB;
- Online application for the substitute license.

This inequity creates further complication to an already urgent shortage of subs for Moorhead and our regional area, which include several small districts such as Dilworth, Barnesville, and Rothsay.

This bill would be beneficial to all MN School Districts, Teachers, and Students, however, for a border city with vastly different requirements than the neighboring state, it is imperative to allow for flexibility in hiring for our districts.

Thank you for your time.