

Committee Members,

I'm writing to you to describe the immense financial burden that individual educators regularly take upon themselves. I would have loved to testify in person, but with educators leaving the profession at an alarming rate it is nearly impossible to find a substitute without weeks of notice.

On an average year I am spending hundreds of my own dollars to supplement my teaching. I am a K-5 music teacher so I don't have the stress of providing food and health supplies to students, but that doesn't mean the district has the ability to fully fund my teaching. I buy markers, pencils, scissors, and all sorts of supplies. I buy culturally relevant music materials so that my teaching stays up to date even when the curriculum does not.

In addition, I frequently receive donations from friends and family. My dad has helped me to gather supplies and make multiple storage units and manipulatives for my students. My sister frequently helps me to buy new student whiteboards and fidgets. These selfless acts help to keep my classroom running.

For the past year my personal expenses have gone through the roof. In the spring I made minimal purchases for distance learning. Like many of us, I was hoping this would only last a month or so. I bought what I needed for a functioning home office. However, once it was clear that we would continue with distance learning in the fall I knew I needed to be better for my students. My district, like others, had a much more robust learning model in place for the 2020-2021 school year. This plan required so many personal purchases. I needed an actual office chair that didn't hurt my back. I bought an external monitor, microphone, tripod, and speaker in order to create the asynchronous music lessons my students needed. I had to upgrade my internet to be able to handle live synchronous classes.

I am now teaching in person. Yet another teaching model. Since January I have purchased the floor tape and sit spots to ensure my students are properly distanced. I have purchased products that allow me to disinfect instruments between students using them. And just today I ordered some child size disposable masks after being told that our school only had adult size masks to offer kids who forget theirs or don't have ones that fit.

My story is not unique or extreme. Teachers everywhere spend hundreds and thousands annually out of their own pockets while salaries aren't even keeping up with inflation. Please consider the immense impact that your choices can have on educators, their families, and their students.

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K-5 Music Specialist