



Austin Education Association Creating Conditions For Student Success

Hello! My name is Tom Compton, 7th Grade US History Teacher and President of the Austin Education Association in Austin, Minnesota. I want to thank you for allowing me the opportunity to express my testimony in support of HF699, the Short-Call Substitute Bill.

Districts throughout the state are facing a substitute shortage and HF699 will not only help us address the substitute shortage, it would also, and arguably most importantly, better assist districts in having the adult populations of schools reflect that of the student body; something the AEA, our school district and other school districts throughout the state, are continuously striving to accomplish. Moreover, my hope is that this bill would provide a subset of our population more opportunities to engage with our schools/students and hopefully encourage these same individuals to pursue education degrees and ultimately, join the profession. Communities with diverse populations such as Austin find it difficult to recruit and retain short call substitutes with the current 4-year degree legislative requirement. Simply trying to pay subs more or hiring full-time in-house subs has not worked.

Furthermore, as a Union, one of our most frequently added items to our Meet & Confer agenda each year is colleague coverage. For example, the 6 weeks preceding Distance Learning last spring, our district was averaging 19 unfilled teaching positions per week, or nearly 4 everyday; requiring these unfilled positions to be filled via colleague coverage. This equates to 95 teachers missing their Prep Time on a weekly basis, or nearly 20 teachers missing their Prep Time on a daily basis. In turn, teachers are forced to work even longer hours outside their normal contract time to plan and prepare for their classes. During the current pandemic, this issue has only multiplied and if already law, HF699 would have done wonders in alleviating this concern.

To make matters worse, in the elementary buildings, colleague coverage is generally facilitated by our instructional coaches/interventionists (TOSAs). This means students who normally receive math or reading intervention, are missing that time because their coach/interventionist is being called upon to sub. If our legislature truly wants to help close the reading and math achievement gaps, diversify the adults in our public-school buildings, and help support the public-school teachers of this great state, passage of this bill would do wonders.

In closing, I want to thank this committee for allowing my testimony in support of HF699 to be heard and I hope my testimony will provide both Houses of our Legislature an opportunity to engage in productive discussions to create a solution that solves the sub crisis our district and many other school districts are facing. Thanks again.

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