

Chair Heinert and Members of the House Education Committee:

My name is Dr. Casey Ozaki, Chair of the Department of Teaching, Leadership, and Professional Practice, and I am providing testimony in support of HB 1517 on behalf of Dr. Shelbie Witte, Dean of the College of Education and Human Development at the University of North Dakota.

Student teaching is widely recognized as the most expensive semester within a teacher preparation program. In addition to paying for tuition, student teachers often have other costs, including but not limited to fees associated with compensating cooperating teachers (who are P-12 classroom teachers) and student teaching supervisors (who are teacher education faculty who evaluate the student teacher’s abilities). Furthermore, student teachers are responsible for the costs of background checks, fingerprinting, state licensure exams (called the Praxis), CPR certification, and teacher license applications. As presented here, the total cost of these required expenses exceeds \$1,400 on average.

Student Teaching Expenses	Amount
Cooperating & Supervising Teacher Stipends	\$ 910
Background Check/Fingerprinting	\$ 45
State Licensure Exam (Praxis II)	\$ 286
CPR Certification	\$ 60
ND Teaching License Application	\$ 105
Total Student Teaching Expenses*	\$ 1,406

In addition to these direct costs, student teachers must also manage living expenses, which typically range from \$6,000-\$11,000 a semester. Despite these financial challenges, student teachers must still cover tuition and fees for the semester.

Compounding this financial burden is the fact that student teachers are very limited in being able to maintain a job since they are already engaged in a full-time student teaching experience for often more than 8 hours a day. As you may know, a student teacher’s role is to eventually take on all the responsibilities of the classroom teacher during the semester of student teaching, all while not getting a single paycheck.

HB 1517 would address this issue by providing student teachers with financial support, thereby reducing the stress associated with their inability to work during the student teaching semester.

By easing the financial strain, the bill would allow student teachers to fully engage in the learning process, which is essential for their development as educators. Student teaching is designed to provide an opportunity for student teachers to experiment with new teaching methods, reflect on student interactions and lesson outcomes, and receive constructive feedback from experienced educators. These experiences are critical in preparing them for a successful career in teaching and, ultimately, in delivering a high-quality education to North Dakota's P-12 students.

When student teachers are forced to work additional jobs to meet financial needs, the impact on their performance is often evident. Their lesson planning becomes rushed, enthusiasm for the profession wanes, and they experience significant fatigue. These challenges could be mitigated if student teachers were compensated for their work, allowing them to dedicate themselves fully to their training without the added pressure of financial insecurity.

HB 1517 represents a crucial step forward in supporting student teachers during this financially challenging period. We strongly recommend that the scholarship be set at a flat rate of \$3,000 per student and be awarded to all student teachers coming from North Dakota teaching programs who are placed within North Dakota schools.

Adequate funding for student teaching is essential to ensuring that qualified students are able to enter the teaching profession. The financial ability to afford both tuition and the student teaching experience should not restrict our pool of qualified North Dakota teachers. Students must have clarity and assurance that financial support will be available to them in a timely manner, enabling them to make informed decisions about pursuing a teaching degree.