COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING

MAIN CAPITOL
ROOM 140
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA

TUESDAY, MARCH 15, 2022
10:00 A.M.

PRESENTATION ON
CURRENT TEACHER SHORTAGE

BEFORE:
HONORABLE CURT SONNEY, MAJORITY CHAIRMAN
HONORABLE MARK LONGIETTI, MINORITY CHAIRMAN
HONORABLE VALERIE GAYDOS (VIRTUAL)
HONORABLE MARK M. GILLEN
HONORABLE BARBARA GLEIM
HONORABLE DAVID HICKERNELL (VIRTUAL)
HONORABLE ANDREW LEWIS
HONORABLE MILOU MACKENZIE (VIRTUAL)
HONORABLE ROBERT MERCURI (VIRTUAL)
HONORABLE JASON ORTITAY (VIRTUAL)
HONORABLE MEGHAN SCHROEDER
HONORABLE CRAIG STAATS
HONORABLE JESSE TOPPER
HONORABLE TIM TWARDZIK
HONORABLE JOE CIRESI
HONORABLE GINA CURRY
HONORABLE CAROL HILL-EVANS
HONORABLE MARY ISAACSON
HONORABLE PATTY KIM
HONORABLE MAUREEN MADDEN (VIRTUAL)
HONORABLE NAPOLEON NELSON
HONORABLE MICHAEL ZABEL (VIRTUAL)
HOUSE COMMITTEE STAFF PRESENT:

CHRISTINE SEITZ
MAJORITY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

DANIEL GLATFELTER
MAJORITY RESEARCH ANALYST

MITCHELL ROSENBERGER
MAJORITY RESEARCH ANALYST

CHRISTINE CRONE
MAJORITY ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT II

ERIN DIXON (VIRTUAL)
MINORITY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

ALYCIA LAURETI
MINORITY RESEARCH ANALYST

BOB BROWNWELL (VIRTUAL)
MINORITY SENIOR LEGISLATIVE ASSISTANT

MARLENA MILLER
MINORITY LEGISLATIVE ASSISTANT

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Pennsylvania House Of Representatives
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
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### SUBMITTED WRITTEN TESTIMONY

(See submitted written testimony and handouts online.)
PROCEEDINGS

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MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: I'd like to welcome everyone to this hearing of the House Education Committee. Once again, I would like to remind everyone that this hearing is being recorded in livestream so the public can watch. If we experience any technical difficulties we will recess the hearing until the technical difficulties can be addressed.

For the members and testifiers participating virtually, please mute your microphones until it is your turn to speak. Each testifier has been asked to limit their testimony to the Committee to three minutes or less and to not read their submitted testimony verbatim.

Following, the presenters will go for questions. I think we'll do a panel. Each group has a panel. And then we'll take questions, you know, to the entire panel.

And so right now I'll ask for the members to identify themselves that are here. I'm Representative Curt Sonney, the Majority Chairman of the House Education Committee, and I represent the 4th Legislative District.

MINORITY CHAIRMAN LONGIETTI: Mark Longietti. I represent the 7th Legislative District in Mercer County, and I serve as the Minority Chairman of the House Education Committee.
REPRESENTATIVE HILL-EVANS: Carol Hill-Evans. I represent the 95th Legislative District in York County.

REPRESENTATIVE ISAACSON: I'm Representative Mary Isaacson from Philadelphia County.

REPRESENTATIVE CIRESI: Joe Ciresi. I represent the 146th in Montgomery County.

REPRESENTATIVE KIM: Good morning. Patti Kim, City of Harrisburg, 103rd District.

REPRESENTATIVE NELSON: Napoleon Nelson representing the 154th District in Montgomery County.

REPRESENTATIVE CURRY: Gina H. Curry representing the 164th in Delaware County.

REPRESENTATIVE GILLEN: Representative Mark Gillen, Berks and Lancaster Counties, at least for the moment.

REPRESENTATIVE TWARDZIK: Representative Tim Twardzik in the snowy Schuylkill County, the 123rd.

REPRESENTATIVE GLEIM: Representative Barb Gleim from portions of Cumberland County.

REPRESENTATIVE STAATS: Good morning. Craig Staats representing the 145th Legislative District in Bucks County.

REPRESENTATIVE SCHROEDER: Thank you.

Representative Meghan Schroeder from the 29th District, also from Bucks County.
MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Chairman Longietti and I would also like to welcome our newest member who's already introduced herself. Representative Gina Curry from the 164th District is replacing Representative Gainey, who we all know is now the Mayor of Pittsburgh. So welcome, Representative.

The House Education Committee will hear from teachers, various school personnel, and other stakeholders from across the Commonwealth regarding the current shortage of qualified teachers and school personnel.

As we have finally achieved a return to in-person instruction for our students this school year, we recognize a new set of challenges before us. One of the most pressing is the shortage of teachers and other qualified school personnel, which places a significant burden on the current teachers and the students alike.

We also know that our schools and this Committee will continue facing the issues and addressing pandemic-related learning loss for years to come as we continue assessing the impact of pandemic-related school closures on students and academic progress.

While members of this Committee and the General Assembly may not agree on every proposed solution, we can all agree that schools must be adequately staffed with qualified teachers and other school personnel to help
ensure student success. To receive a holistic view of this issue, the Committee has invited various school administrators, school personnel, and individuals working in the field of teacher preparation, development, and certification to testify with us here today.

Chairman Longietti.

MINORITY CHAIRMAN LONGIETTI: Thank you, Chairman Sonney. And I want to thank you for calling this very important hearing regarding teacher shortages. And this is -- you know, this is a problem that existed prior to the pandemic. It got heightened during the pandemic, and I'm afraid it's going to be with us for some time.

And I think it's an area where we can find some bipartisan consensus on trying to address it from a policy standpoint. You know, the classroom teacher is the greatest asset that we have in public education.

We can all look back on our life and identify that teacher that made a huge difference in our lives. And we need to find ways to encourage people to enter the profession. You know, Pennsylvania used to be an exporter, so to speak, of certified teachers. We have great preparation programs here in the Commonwealth.

But something is happening that's causing folks to not enter the profession and causing others to leave the profession prematurely, and I'm very interested to hear the
testimony today to hear from people that are on the ground and understand this challenge and perhaps some solutions to solving it because it is such an important issue for our time. And we need to treat these folks as professionals.

This is a professional calling, and we need to make sure that their working conditions and their compensation are such that people can make this a career and impact students in a positive way. So I'm very interested to hear the testimony.

And again, I thank you, Mr. Chairman, for calling this hearing.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Thank you.

The Department of Education will be the first panel. We have Dr. Tanya Garcia, Deputy Secretary and Commissioner for Postsecondary and Higher Education; Dr. Kerry Helm, Chief Division of Certification Services; Dr. Desha Williams, Dean, West Chester University; and Dr. John Ward, PA Association of College and Teacher Educators.

If I could ask all of you to please stand and raise your right hand to be sworn in.

(Oath Administered.)

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Thank you. You may be seated.

Dr. Garcia will begin when she's ready.

DR. GARCIA: Good morning, Chairman Sonney,
Chairman Longietti, and distinguished members of the House Education Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you on Pennsylvania's shrinking educator workforce. My name is Tanya Garcia. I'm the Deputy Secretary and Commissioner at for PDE, for postsecondary and higher education. And I'm pleased to have here with me Dr. Kerry Helm who is the Acting Bureau Director of School Leadership and Teacher Quality and Division Chief for Certification Services.

We're honored to be on this panel and we look forward to your questions and the continued dialog.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Dr. Helm, do you have any opening remarks?

DR. HELM: No. Those were our opening remarks. Just to verify, I'm Dr. Kerry Helm. I am Acting Bureau Director currently of Bureau School Leadership and Teacher quality, but my primary role is Division of Certification Services, Division Chief, so that's my primary.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Very good.

Dr. Desha Williams, do you have any opening remarks.

DR. WILLIAMS: Good morning. I'm Dr. Desha Williams, Dean of the College of Education and Social Work, and I thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak about the shortage of teachers in the Commonwealth.
MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: And Dr. John Ward.

DR. WARD: Chair Sonney, Chair Longietti, and members of the House Education Committee, my name's John Ward. I am Dean of the College of Education at Kutztown University and I'm President-Elect of PAC-TE, and we appreciate the opportunity to testify before the Committee today.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Thank you. I'll start off with the first question then.

Dr. Garcia, so what's your overall assessment? You know, obviously we know the predicament we're in. We are not necessarily certain how to get out of it anytime soon. But what's your assessment on how we're going to move forward to increase not only the number of prospective teachers but also of prospective substitutes?

DR. GARCIA: Thank you very much, Chairman Sonney. We have a lot of work to do and we must do it collectively if we are to achieve any improvement in the educator workforce of Pennsylvania.

We have been concerned about these issues for quite some time. The past decade has seen enrollments in postsecondary education drop to levels that are not sustainable. And of course one of the biggest determinants of who enters educator preparation programs are those who enter postsecondary education to begin with.
And so one of the most promising trends in the 2018-'19, and '19-'20 school years was that we finally saw an increase in the number of individuals declaring education as their major in educator prep programs.

Of course, that precedes the pandemic, and I'm really worried about what that trend might look like now that we know that across the country there have been one million fewer students enrolled in postsecondary education.

And so part of the solution here involves increasing to a much greater extent alignment between LEAs, charter schools, in the intermediate units the institutions of higher education who have educator preparation programs, and what we know about the barriers that prevent individuals from being identified as future educators for Pennsylvania, being recruited, being encouraged to enroll in postsecondary education, and being encouraged to pursue education as a major and to complete the requirements that enable them to finally enter our classrooms across the Commonwealth.

That assessment might not be reassuring to many of us across the state and it shouldn't be reassuring. Instead, we should seize upon this opportunity to really dramatically change the way in which we prepare, attract, and retain all educators. Because, as you mentioned at the outset, now that we are singularly focused on the provision
of in-person instruction, we must not only prepare teachers for what's ahead for all of our young people, we must also increase the infrastructure of support that is available to students in some districts but not others when it comes to professional support staff and other individuals.

And so we're delighted to share some of the work that we're engaging in at PDE and across the state with our partners, and we remain committed to solving this educator workforce shortage that is really going to stymie our efforts to prepare future Pennsylvanians for the workforce that awaits them.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Thank you.

And I have one more question for Dr. Desha Williams.

DR. WILLIAMS: Good morning.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Good morning. On your side of it, are you getting much feedback on, number one, why students aren't either electing or finishing once they take the education route and/or once they've entered the workforce, you know, have you been watching and seeing if the numbers are declining on how many, you know, leave it rather quickly after a year or two and decide that it was not for them, which would kind of reflect back to how prepared they were for what was -- what they were going to experience, right?
And so if they're really not prepared for the experience that they're going to have in that classroom, it's obviously going to lead them to want to leave, and we have to stem that from happening.

DR. WILLIAMS: Right. Well, a lot of the trends have shown that we have a greater number -- you know, we've got a lot of teachers who are retiring and that the number of students that are entering the workforce are not keeping up with the retirement rate just because of -- you know, just the timing of it all.

Also, students are showing that people leave the profession at about five years or more, not really within the first two years, and they're leaving for multiple reasons that are just numerous.

The students are looking for flexibility, as well as the perception of being a teacher has changed over the course of time. You know, I remember when being a teacher was revered and now that perception has changed. So I asked the question how can we change that narrative to get more students interested, you know, early on?

A lot of districts are working with higher ed preparation programs to create pathways so that students become more interested in being a teacher at a younger age, like in high school, and looking at ways to create these pathway programs such that we can retain their interest.
through high school into the teacher preparation programs, and I think that that will help that bottleneck of teachers coming into the -- to increase the pipeline.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: And at your level are you also looking at ways to possibly get these students more time in the classroom during their education? Do you think that it is important to do that?

DR. WILLIAMS: Absolutely. Our programs start at West Chester -- they start in the field in their freshman year. They start getting exposure into schools early into their program beginning in their freshman and sophomore year. Student teaching is not until their senior year but they have exposure in the classes very, very early on. And I think that's important to get that exposure so they know exactly what's going to happen, what they're getting into as they go into the classroom.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: And do you believe they're getting enough of that hands-on training?

DR. WILLIAMS: Absolutely. But you know, there's always an opportunity for more.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Thank you.

Representative Topper has joined us today.
And Representative Gleim.

REPRESENTATIVE GLEIM: Hi. Thank you for being here today. I have just two quick questions for Dr.
Garcia, if that's okay.

I had worked on the substitute teacher bill and I also had talked to many stakeholders about the crisis with not having enough teachers, as well.

And so my question is in an emergency like this where we really need to bring new teachers on, couldn't we allow individuals with an associate's degree to come on board like they do in our neighboring states, enter the profession with maybe an MOU of some sort that they continue on to get their bachelor's degree and then we can keep them in the pipeline?

DR. GARCIA: Thank you so much for the question, Representative Gleim. You're absolutely correct. Act 91 was absolutely instrumental in our ability to quickly infuse the field with new individuals to enter the educator and teacher profession, specifically substitutes.

Part of the provisions of Act 91 do create a lot of pathways for substitutes because that addresses one of the primary goals, which is, you know, we don't have enough people entering the profession and the substitute route can be a way of attracting new people to the profession.

I'd like to ask Dr. Helm to expand on the Act 91 provisions. And Act 91 really served an immediate critical need from an emergency stance perspective, and so that is an important relief to the field and it also complements
other routes that are available to superintendents that have actually existed since prior the pandemic and prior to Act 91. So I'll ask him to expand on that.

DR. HELM: Thank you. We just concluded with Chapter 49, which governs educator preparation certification and in Chapter 49, obviously, it creates this requirement for a bachelor's degree. So a statutory, you know, action would obviously allow something like that to occur and we did have internal discussions about that even prior to the passage of Act 91, in particular with the day-to-day subs, an 06. You know, looking at other states and allowing people with less than a bachelor's degree to serve as an 06.

Considering the fact that the 06 sub will always be, you know -- and I've spent 35 years in education -- will always be an issue. Those are subs you need and those numbers remain static because teachers are absent, and so on and so forth.

But ultimately, addressing the teacher shortage will address the sub shortage, and that's going to take some statutory action which allows those types of things to happen.

REPRESENTATIVE GLEIM: Okay. Thank you for that. When I, you know, was looking at other states I know that the State of Maryland allows teachers to enter into the
workforce with an associate's degree, and that's apart from substitutes. And so when I asked about that in my journey I was shot down, saying no, in Pennsylvania you have to have a bachelor's. So it does create a little bit of a barrier there.

And then my second question is could I possibly receive the data or the study you referred to in the testimony where the State increase in teacher pay is associated with the gains in student performance? Because when I looked down at the footnote there, that is pretty much a national poll that -- it goes across the globe, and it's mostly outside of the U.S.

But do we have stats in PA that show that if you increase teachers' pay that there is an increase -- a definite correlation to the increase in student performance?

DR. GARCIA: We are looking at several other state models into the teacher pay. I know that there's a lot of analysis that's occurring. I'm going to ask Dr. Helm to elaborate on that. We do know that when -- overall, you know, speaking from my background in education and workforce development, we do know that pay is associated with overall fulfillment.

Of course, it's not the only factor here in, you know, having professionals feel fulfilled in their jobs.
But because of the longstanding statute that has existed, I don't know, since what year, maybe in the '80s or '90s, we really need to take a new look at the way in which we convey that the educator profession is an honorable one, one that needs to be demonstrably valued in our society. And there's no time like the present in order to make that one of the signals that individuals receive and that enhance our ability to recruit more into the profession.

Of course, the other side of that, that comes with increased pay, has to do with, you know, in the event that many of our students regardless of their major graduate with just overwhelming student loan debt.

We have to make many changes that provide relief from -- whether it's from the federal student loan -- public service loan forgiveness standpoint. And so both of those aspects are needed and we have to include that to a greater extent in our messaging because even if a student has to take out loans which, you know, I actually had to do to finance my education, higher pay basically enables those individuals to take that step and not be overwhelmed with student loan debt.

But I'll ask Dr. Helm to elaborate on just teacher pay, in general.

DR. HELM: So just to clarify, you're asking for data related to -- that was referred to earlier in
testimony; is that correct?

    REPRESENTATIVE GLEIM: Yes. In the very first testimony here, there is a statement here that says studies find increased teacher pay is associated with gains in student performance. And so I'm just asking if you could just forward that data to me. That's all I'm asking.

    DR. HELM: Sure. Okay.

    REPRESENTATIVE GLEIM: Yeah.

    MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Chairman Longietti.

    MINORITY CHAIRMAN LONGIETTI: Thank you all for being here and just -- before I ask the question, I just want to point out because Dr. Williams talked about trying to attract people earlier on into the profession. And Representative Schlossberg has reintroduced the Grow Your Own Educator legislation and has really invited bipartisan support of that.

    You know, we talk about this in so many other areas. We've got to reach kids in the younger grades and get them interested in certain professions, so I just invite my colleagues to take a look at that and see if we can find some bipartisan support for it.

    But I want to ask two questions, if I could, to the panel. And Dr. Garcia, you referenced in your testimony that the certification process can be a barrier -- a barrier for everybody but also a barrier for
minority teachers, which is something that we've seen a precipitous drop in the Commonwealth.

And so I'm interested to hear what the department, since that is in your purview -- what you've done and what you're working on, and I'm interested to hear from the others what they see needs to be improved in that regard. So that's question number one.

Question number two, and you kind of touched on it, but, you know, Marc Tucker in his book Surpassing Shanghai looked at what other countries do -- other countries, other states, and has drawn some conclusions. Countries that are succeeding, that they elevate the profession.

And you've referenced that in terms of, comparatively speaking, compensation, but also the professionalism, providing people with the level of support that they need, allowing them to really become craftspeople in their profession by having time in their schedules to interact with other teachers, to have lead teachers be able to coach, to bounce off from one another ideas. I think that's why people want to come into the classroom to begin with.

But I'd like to hear from you and the panel on that subject. You know, what can we do that other countries or other states are doing to elevate the
profession?

So those two areas, the certification issue and that.

Thank you.

DR. GARCIA: Thank you so much for the question, Representative Longietti.

So the certification process has many, many components to it that Dr. Helm is especially poised to respond to.

Part of the challenge in streamlining the certification process, which is actually one of the focus areas of a forthcoming educator workforce strategy that we'll be unveiling in the next month or so, is to really address some of the statutory and regulatory changes that, you know, may have worked really, really well when they were first designed.

But as we know, public policy needs to change and be informed by the needs of today, and that is one of the reasons why the streamlining of the certification process -- some of the things that need to happen, PDE is -- does not have the authority to do on its own.

And so I'm going to ask Dr. Helm to denote what some of those issues are. And we would be more than delighted to engage in those conversations with all of you on this Committee because, quite frankly, we cannot do it
alone.

And I also know that from an educator preparation program standpoint there are things that PDE can do, but in order to move in those directions some of the statutory requirements need to be reviewed and revised.

So I'm going to ask Dr. Helm to fill in on what those barriers are.

DR. HELM: Thank you. There are a lot of components to discuss and I'll try to be brief and to the point. I took over the Division of Certification Services in 2019, but as I said, I have 35 years in education. I'm one of the folks you referenced. I graduated in '87 from Shippensburg University and then went to teach in Virginia because there weren't jobs really available at the time.

And ultimately -- I didn't take any tests. I didn't take any test to get into the program and I didn't take any test to be a teacher. Now, as we're aware, the rigor associated with the last few decades has increased. And I'm not criticizing that and I'm not making any -- you know, advocating for any significant changes. I'm just saying that it's kind of gone from a wide bottom of a pyramid to, you know, the top of that pyramid. And the obvious, you know, consequences of that is we do have fewer folks who are entering the profession.

So that's one thing that we can address
statutorily, and particularly the fact that we just
finished with Chapter 49 is we're going to open Chapter
354. And that governs educator preparation. So we have
this opportunity right now to address some of those things.

One of the things that we've talked about a lot
in the last few years at the Department is the basic skills
assessment requirement, and I think you're familiar with
that. That has a statutory requirement. Is that creating
a hurdle for folks to get into programs, you know?

And in terms of all the other requirements that
are outlined in 354, how many folks is that preventing from
getting into programs and the fact that they're in place
that that's created this streamline, a streamline of folks
who are getting into programs and ultimately getting into
the teaching field?

We're certifying probably around between 5- and
6,000 people, pretty much, in the last eight years. But
those numbers were obviously higher and because there were
more people coming out of programs.

And as far as the process, I've been concerned
about the process since I took over in 2019. And my
primary concerns are with the teacher information
management system, which is used to process applications.
It was introduced to the Department in 2011-'12, and that
system really needs to be looked at.
Fortunately, with Dr. Garcia's help, we recently were able to put out an RFQ and we're now looking at having someone come in and look at that system and evaluate that system.

And the last thing I'll just make mention of is, you know, we're currently putting back folks into positions we have. We don't have quite as many people as we had in the past, and I think there was an assumption a decade or so ago whenever TIMS was introduced that it would automate the process and our staff numbers were lower. And that's before my time, obviously.

But I can certainly say we have 11 folks now who process applications and that's their number one thing that they need to do. And I protect the integrity of that because that's really what we're there to do. But they also are responsible for answering phone calls, answering emails. It's the same 11 people who do all of that, so it's quite a -- you know, an overwhelming job that they're doing and, you know, we're all working together to try to make that happen.

And fortunately, under Dr. Garcia's leadership, we are, you know, getting more staff back to try to address the reaching out to people who need assistance because it's complex. The certification in Pennsylvania is complex and helping people understand what they need to do and then
getting them through the teacher information management system and getting them to that final point where they're actually certified.

So that's something we've really been looking hard at. But we have an opportune time right now with Chapter 354 being open soon to address some of these things as far as getting more people in the pipeline.

DR. GARCIA: I'd like to address, if I may, Representative, the diversification question that you raised. So part of the -- the other priority that I'm leading at the Department is to support the State Board of Education Council of Higher Education in updating Pennsylvania's master plan for higher education.

And I wanted to share with you that when it comes to high school students enrolling in postsecondary education, that is one area that needs a lot more attention because when you look at postsecondary enrollment of these high school graduates by race and ethnicity, Asian Pennsylvanians are the group most likely to enroll in postsecondary education -- 77 percent of them.

But when you look at Black African-American and Hispanic Latino high school graduates of Pennsylvania, African-American enrollments are only 35 percent of that graduating class enrolled in postsecondary and only 34 percent of Hispanic or Latinx high school graduates
enrolled in postsecondary.

So that really goes to the core of who is going to college in the first place and who is going to hopefully choose education as a major, right? And so when we looked at the educator preparation program candidates who -- the most recent data that we have available is from 2018-'19, so that's pre-pandemic -- less than 2 percent of Asian students enrolled declared education as their major, 5.2 percent of Black African-American students declared education as their major, and less than 4 percent of Hispanic and Latinx college students enrolled in education as a major.

That is in stark contrast to the 82.3 percent of White postsecondary students declaring education as their major. And so that -- those two data points really bookend why we need to increase postsecondary enrollments of high school graduates and also invite career changers into the profession in order to diversify the teacher and the educator pipeline.

So those data points underscore why we don't have more candidates pursuing educator professions that are ready to join the Pennsylvania educator workforce. And I didn't want to miss the opportunity to do that.

The Aspiring to Educate pilot that concluded and worked with a variety of institutions of higher education
in the southeastern Pennsylvania region has a lot of promising practices. You mentioned the Grow Your Own programs. There's not a lot of evidence yet around Grow Your Own programs. And so we're trying to build the evidence around not just getting more individuals interested in educator professions but also assessing and evaluating how well, you know, we prepare them to become teachers and school leaders.

And so with PA Smart Dollars, we're going to be unveiling sometime in the spring the next Aspiring to Educate pilot focusing on the STEM teacher workforce, and that is one of the efforts that we're working towards in order to help ameliorate the situation.

MINORITY CHAIRMAN LONGIETTI: And I do want to invite Dr. Williams and Dr. Ward to comment, and I suspect you may have something to say about TIMS or about what can be done to help provide pathways into the profession.

DR. WARD: Yeah. I would particularly like to talk about barriers. And Pennsylvania has long been considered to be like the gold standard in teacher education and that's because we've had higher standards, as Mr. Helm said.

Some of those standards, I think, are really important to maintain like PDE has requirements for us to have field experiences throughout our programs starting at
first year. That's pretty common across Pennsylvania. And graduating kids getting more and more. Also in Pennsylvania, you have to have a major in the content area that you're teaching if you're a secondary ed person. And licensure tests, of course. And the 3.0 test for GPA requirement has been important. I've seen it personally that it makes a real difference in the quality.

But there is one barrier that really stops a lot of students and it's completely unnecessary, and that's the basic skills testing. There are not many states that still do it. There are 15. Some big states like Michigan and Ohio have dropped it.

As you know, we had a moratorium put on the basic skills testing during the pandemic. And during that -- I think it was about a six month period where some of our students were eligible -- 186 students qualified for formal admission to the program because that requirement was eliminated, at least for a short time.

That's going to show up in an actual bump in graduates in a year or so. So that's a small change but it makes a huge difference.

And the last thing I want to say about the basic skills testing is it's kind of an arbitrary requirement that there really is no evidence that it relates to good teaching as some of those other things like GPA and content
area licensure and field experience all do relate to quality teaching.

MINORITY CHAIRMAN LONGIETTI: Dr. Williams.

DR. WILLIAMS: And I could not agree more with Dr. Ward about the basic skills test. With the moratorium of the basic skills based on Act 136, West Chester was able to add an additional 75 teachers to the pipeline who were able to get formal admissions. And now -- if you look at what Dr. Ward reported, now we're saying 261 teachers, new teachers in the field, because of that.

I argue, give us a person who loves kids and we can teach them to teach. We can't teach a person who doesn't love kids, you know, first because that has to be the primary goal.

And I also agree with the Chapter 354. 354 has a component in it that requires six hours of English language credits, as well as six hours of mathematics to prepare for the basic skills test in which Dr. Ward has shown that that does not have any bearing on whether or not a person is going to be an effective teacher, which is mainly saying it's increasing time to completion.

Because in some cases that's increasing the number of credit hours needed to complete a program that's not attached to what's needed for certification; it's basic skills preparation courses that's required that a lot of
students don't need. Some students actually are able to exempt the basic skills test but they still are required to take those 12 hours in their program, which again is increasing time to completion, increasing their credit hours, and then, of course, then increasing that debt ratio for their college experience.

Thank you.

MINORITY CHAIRMAN LONGIETTI: Very helpful.

Thank you.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Representative Nelson.

REPRESENTATIVE NELSON: Thank you. I appreciate it.

So can you testify that you believe that we have enough aspiring teachers entering our school -- our higher education institutions but not getting through or I know you've mentioned the drop-off in number of applicants entering those positions as it looks like about 35 percent over the course of the decade?

Do we have a pipeline issue that's most prevalent in the higher ed space or most prevalent at the -- I'll call it the middle school/high school aspiring educators base?

DR. GARCIA: Let me make sure I understand your question, Representative Nelson. So are you referring to the drop in postsecondary enrollment in the last decade and
how that impacts our ability to prepare future educators?

REPRESENTATIVE NELSON: Yes.

DR. GARCIA: Okay. Okay. So you're absolutely right. Part of the issue is the way in which we encourage and inspire our youngest learners to enter the profession. A lot of times some of that inspiration comes from the most important person in the room, which is their teacher, right? And so that person in that profession -- Dean Williams is absolutely right -- that is the key first ingredient, you know.

And so I have to reflect on the fact that we can't divorce the drop in enrollments across Pennsylvania in the postsecondary space without also addressing that college is not affordable in the Commonwealth.

Research from a federal advocacy group, Higher Learning Advocates, shows that across the nation 34 percent of all students enrolled in colleges and universities across the country are first generation. And that has immediate implications for whether or not young people and people of color and low income people pursue a postsecondary education.

And those are trends that are playing out here, as well, in Pennsylvania. And so when you combine whether or not young people, regardless of race, ethnicity are encouraged to go to college are given the supports they
need, which is really beyond tuition and fees and extends
to other costs of attendance that have really contributed
to the lack of college affordability and to the supports
that they receive as they're about to enter the profession,
we cannot, you know, address those issues without also
addressing how we have to make college more affordable and
we have to absolutely draw attention to the fact that many
more students today are coming from households where
neither parent went to college.

And so when you combine all of those factors
together, we're looking at young people who do not possess
the college knowledge that they need in order to make those
critical life decisions.

REPRESENTATIVE NELSON: It's interesting. One of
the -- so Gallup has a student engagement survey. It's a
very prominent survey. They also do workplace engagement
and all those good things. In their student engagement
survey, one of the differences between that and the work
place engagement survey is they asked if the student has
aspiration. Because a student who doesn't have aspiration
generally doesn't achieve. They're not engaged. And if
we're not giving our young people aspirations then they're
oftentimes not getting what they need in school.

One of the other things though I think is
important is that when we talk about a teacher shortage,
we're not talking about bodies, per se. And thank you to the Dean -- the last who spoke, because if you could and what is not yet part of this testimony is the impact, well-documented, of successive years of underprepared or ineffective teaching on a student's achievement.

We don't have time to really delve into that but I think it's important that we understand the solution to our teacher shortage can't be how do we get more bodies in. It's got to be how do we get more quality capable bodies because those underqualified or underprepared teachers who become bodies in our classrooms, not only are they doing harm to our students, they're not college ready. They're not able to step into the roles that our school system has built for them to.

But they also realistically aren't aspiring to be. Nobody aspires to be the underprepared, uninspired teacher that they see in front of them.

Can you talk a little bit about how PDE has to walk that tightrope that says we not only are in charge of educating but what sort of ownership does PDE have to ensuring that they're providing the sorts of role models that lead those students to want to be high quality teachers?

DR. GARCIA: Absolutely. Thank you so much for that question.
So there's a lot of research that in the last couple of years of the pandemic really emphasize the critical role that continuous professional learning and development plays in our ability to retain the individuals who enter educator prep programs. And just, you know, in general. You know, we've been in a grand experiment for the past two years of what it means to lead in the times that we find ourselves in.

And so what I know about what we need to unpack from, a statewide perspective at PDE, is really clarifying and enhancing that transition between student teaching, residency programs, and induction.

Right now, I do not believe that future educators have a clear conception in their mind about what each of those professional development activities actually mean and part of that has to do with the siloization of the profession. You know, I've spoken and I've written in the past about how K-12 and higher education must be more closely aligned. So student teaching is a partnership between the ed prep program and the LEAs where students do their student teaching.

The residency programs are another form of that and induction is really what LEAs bring to the table when you have beginning educators.

And so I think that it's our responsibility and
we are actually closely looking at what happens and what
should happen or needs to happen in each of those entry
points into the profession because if we're not clear about
what needs to happen in those pathways then imagine someone
who's about to enter the profession. You know, what we
have learned throughout the pandemic is that student
supports must and need to occur and not be neglected in
that transition from K-12 to higher education. And the
educator profession is no exception to that.

And so thank you.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Representative Topper.

REPRESENTATIVE TOPPER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Williams and Dr. Ward, Dr. Garcia had mentioned before
about career changes, and I'd kind of like to look at that
from a higher education perspective. So for those who
are -- you know, let's just say they're in Corporate
America, they're in the private sector, they're burnt out
with their job or they have a passion for teaching or
maybe, you know, they've got into coaching an
extracurricular and now they want to pursue that in
teaching, do you think -- what can we do at the higher
education level that you see to make those transitions a
little easier?

These are people with life experience. These are
people that in some cases we might -- you know, if I hear
from all of my schools that I represent, all 10 of them, they're having a hard time finding specific subjects especially at the secondary level in terms of, whether it be physics or chemistry, some specific subjects that perhaps these people have expertise in. What would be areas that we can make that transition easier?

Because they're not going to go from working full-time to now taking two years off to go to school and then a -- you know, a year off student teaching without being compensated. So are there any ways that are being discussed that we can help some of these career changers or second-career folks enter the field a little more quickly?

Thank you.

DR. WILLIAMS: Absolutely. I'm actually one of those people who started in Corporate America and then came into education as a second career. So you know, you -- it's -- you can go far and do lots of things. But there's definitely pathways for that to help individuals with families and bills and responsibility to continue to support their families while completing teacher preparation programs.

Online models, we have provisional certifications, emergency certifications where teachers they can still get their full-time pay, be teacher of record while going through our programs to complete their
teacher preparation and still -- you know, and attending to some of those pipeline needs while completing their program and earning a master's degree at the same time because they already typically have a bachelor's degree, some even higher. And so then, they come, they get their master's degree in education as long -- as well as their certification program while sometimes teaching and some people actually can take the time off to do that.

   DR. WARD: So one thing I want to add is that that group of students is generally very responsive to the market, so if the job -- you know, the job prospects are good, more people should be coming into the field for that reason. People don't want to leave one profession and then go through schooling and then find that there's not a job on the other end, so that should be very positive. But I have to say, at least anecdotally, I haven't seen a large increase of people returning.

   And I think what is needed are the kind of things that Dr. Williams talked about, especially residency programs where there's a purposeful partnership with the school district, and there is a year-long internship, essentially, where returning students are being paid but also experience a quality program, not just thrown into the classroom and say you're a teacher at the end of the year but a very purposeful partnership with the university.
REPRESENTATIVE TOPPER: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Representative Isaacson.

REPRESENTATIVE ISAACSON: Hi. Thank you. It's been an interesting conversation. As I said earlier, I'm from Philadelphia, and we certainly have some major challenges with regard to our teachers right now. They're leaving by the droves, and it has to also do with an investment in long-term education but also in the short term. Certainly, as you mentioned the pandemic has been a challenge for everybody.

I'm looking at your testimony. You talked about an educated workforce strategy that you're working on and some of the discussion this morning has been about, you know, our pipeline. And I think a lot of that has to do with the fact that I said earlier somebody mentioned how teachers used to be revered. You know, you hand your children over to them to be -- have somebody be the most influential person in their life besides you, and now, they're constantly under attack and that certainly doesn't make for people wanting to stay.

And the pipeline has to not just include new teachers coming in, but you need seasoned, experienced teachers to guide them along on the best practices. And
again with the college affordability and the lack of pay that we give them here in Pennsylvania, how do you ask somebody to take on that kind of debt when you're not even paying them enough to pay for a mortgage and their debt payment, much less start a family and keep roots here in Pennsylvania? So I understand we need to address that. And we certainly don't want to tell people that we're going to dumb down the education requirements of those that are going to bring our children along because we are judged as a society on how we educate the society that we have certainly make sure that the tenor of society is more inclusive. And I wanted to go towards the education workforce strategy with regard to the diversification. You spoke about, what can we do to make sure that we have an attractive package for the people who look like the children that they're teaching? You remarked about the Asian Community and the African-American Community considering these are the -- and the Hispanic Community, and these are the largest sectors that are growing here in Pennsylvania. And we certainly want to have educators there leading those children who look like them, but we need to make it affordable. What are some strategies that we can do? Is it marketing, or?

DR. GARCIA: Thank you so much for the question, Representative Isaacson. So there are many strategies.
When Pennsylvania was developing its state ARP ESSER Plan, we identified four ways in LEAs, Local Education Agencies, could attract and incentivize new teachers and school leaders into the profession. One way, as you alluded to in your earlier remarks, is on developing mentoring programs between veteran and new teachers. That's one way that LEAs can use their ARP ESSER dollars. They can also use those dollars to incentivize and provide, you know, essentially what is common practice in the corporate world, which are, you know, sign-on bonuses in order to, you know, attract people into the profession.

The other two ways that LEAs can use ARP ESSER dollars -- you know, because I'm beginning within the federal investment because there was a historic investment. That third round of stimulus funding is probably the largest in the nation's history, and so it really enabled our superintendents and their teams to dramatically change the way in which they recruit and hire individuals. The other two ways that ARP ESSER dollars could be used has to do with, you know, creating grow-your-own programs and the like. And so the school district of Philadelphia was the school district that worked with the institutions of higher education and the Aspiring to Educate program. And so they have already some pretty good footing within which to increase that diversification of the pipeline.
Personally, I know that I was educated in Baltimore, Maryland and Miami, Florida. In first grade and in the -- Ms. Randall (ph) was the first teacher of color that I had. Mrs. Keys (ph) in Miami, Florida was of Jamaican descent. And then Ms. Garcia (ph) and Mr. Jerado (ph) taught me French and physics. I know I'm a direct result of the impact that having teachers of color and teachers who look like you in the classroom. And I'm really, really hoping that that can be part of what we focus on going forward in Pennsylvania because the projections that the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education produces on who are high school graduates are and who they will be by 2025, there is going to be an overall decline in the size of the K-12 population, but within that decline there will be an increase in students of color and students of two or more races. And so we really have less than three years left to prepare the educator workforce for that future that is very quickly upon us.

REPRESENTATIVE ISAACSON: Well, thank you. And I won't take up any more time except to thank you for pointing out that that stimulus money could go towards a mentoring program, since it's obviously raining in Philadelphia and Pennsylvania. Thank you.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Representative Ciresi.
REPRESENTATIVE CIRESI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
And thank you all for testifying. You know, Representative Isaacson brought up a point that I was going to, the revered point that was made in the testimony about our teachers. And when I think about the teachers I've had through my life and how they were revered and where we are today and sitting on a school board for 12 years and hearing people come and berate some of our teachers for what they were doing.

But I wanted to ask you about the issue of not only that Basic Skills test that -- when I hear that, I think, well, now we're not going to teach our teachers how to teach, and that's a perception in the public that may be heard rather than what you're trying to get to but also how we are teaching in the classrooms and what we're teaching. And we have heard for years, we teach to a test; we don't teach any longer. Should we not be looking at the fundamentals of what we're doing in the classroom to stimulate and entice people and come and want to teach rather than say, I go to a classroom; I teach to a test?

When I was a kid we didn't have that. And I usually blame our generation because we didn't have that, and I thought well, we have to teach a test and see if they can pass. But should we be looking to change the whole philosophy of what we do in public education? And then
when we look to support it financially, salary-wise is one thing but also what our children have in the classrooms and help our teachers teach. We talk about having a reserve in Pennsylvania or a budget -- over, you know, $7 billion that we have in the budget this year. And when we put money in education properly, would that also stimulate not only in salary-wise but the classroom itself what we should be doing to have people come into this field?

DR. GARCIA: Thank you so much for that question, Representative. So yes, where do I begin in answering that question? Part of what really keeps me up at night is our ability to take a look at what the true purpose of teaching and assessments mean for our society as a whole. In the post-secondary world, there's a huge movement on going test optional, and part of the larger dialogue around assessments is that, yes, we need assessments. But what are other ways in which we can use assessments than the way in which we currently use them?

A lot of the work that the National Conference on State Legislatures has been working on is really about reframing assessments from a diagnostic point of view. And that is one thing that many other countries have shifted to, in the way in which we assess where young learners are in their educational journeys and which are going to be much more helpful in the long run in addressing any of
those learning gaps that they experience along the way. And so I would welcome continued dialogues around assessments. And let me ask Dr. Helm if he has anything to say on that topic? Because, you know, certification is filled with assessments as well.

DR. HELM: Well, as we alluded to earlier and Dr. Ward had talked about the Basic Skills assessment that's one thing that we're looking at obviously. One of the recommendations on the table with that was the potential to possibly do a moratorium and then commission a study on the effectiveness of that Basic Skills assessment. My understanding was that was created because folks were going through programs and couldn't pass the test to become certified. So it certainly would be acceptable, I think, to commission a study to see if that -- if the Basic Skills assessment has actually created a situation where more people are being -- are able to pass the content test at the end of their programs.

But the general question I think you're referring to is, we're preparing the whole teacher. So right now with Chapter 49, the competencies that folks are being prepared is awareness, cultural awareness, all these things that go into that to make sure that whatever the teacher encounters when they get that first job and they're asked to teach, they're -- you know, the rigor is there. And we
don't want to kind of divorce the rigor from the fact that we also want to try to, you know, create situation where we have more folks.

So it's not just about -- as was shared earlier, about creating more bodies but more folks that are able to fill these positions in these areas where there are shortages. And so that's really where we're working with 49 and 354 eventually to address these issues to make sure that we have teachers that come out that know their content but also are able to deal with other issues that we're encountering now in classrooms that we didn't see in the last decade or longer.

REPRESENTATIVE CIRESI: Well, I think that some of the things that we see with teachers is some of them teach a little unconventional where the kids remember. I mean, I can remember back to sixth grade the way I was taught. And the way the teacher taught was a little bit different than what we see today because they didn't have the restraints of having to teach to that test, the PSSAs or whatever the requirement is. It's not only Pennsylvania. This is across the nation. I mean, we're not unique in this. But I think we need to address what is happening in our classroom to address how we stimulate and how we get more people into the field. So thank you both very much.
MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Representative Curry.

REPRESENTATIVE CURRY: There we go. Thank you very much. So there were just a few things -- I know we have others that need to testify. But I just wanted to bring to light what you said about the diversity piece that I feel is key in terms of how we look at this. But one of the things that I didn't really hear -- I did hear from Dr. Williams was that people who love children need to get into this profession. But part of what has happened in education and what I've seen and my experience as being a school board member as well before coming to the house, is the trauma that happens in the classroom with children of color, oftentimes, that when they leave that -- you know, they graduate, they're like, I'm out of here; I'm going to do something different. We know that that's a part of the problem.

I'm looking to introduce some legislation that really talks about getting to the bottom of recruiting, retaining, and really looking at the diversity part. And three things that I want to talk about that maybe the appointment of someone in PDE, the actual appointment and focus on this. I know that everybody in PDE is looking at the issue, but if there's somebody that is actually focused on this throughout the state that goes out and works with the colleges and universities and someone that can support
the actual districts in doing it.

So in the school district that I represent right now, in the Upper Darby School District, we have a club called the Rising Educators Club. And the Rising Educators Club is happily producing two assistant principals by the end of July, okay, so that's a positive because we're not talking about too many positives right now. That's a positive. I know a young recent graduate that graduated with my daughter from the high school who's coming back to teach in the high school, African-American woman that graduated from West Chester. So these are positives. But some of the things that we need to probably focus on is that focus.

And then also, have you thought about the CTE route? The CTE route, meaning the Career and Technical Education, where there's a establishment of programs of study that focus on education. And lastly, looking at dual enrollment, we talk about the cost of education and where it leaves students and the reason why they don't look at the universities to go into their next spaces. What are we doing to really -- I know we worked with Delaware County Community College on the dual enrollment, but helping these students to get these credits before they even go into a West Chester University or some of the other universities, like Kutztown, where they're already almost prepared and
have to finish in another way?

And lastly, before I give up the mic, looking at ways for loan relief and not only that, the actual experience in the field -- you know, having more of that experience and getting paid for it. So I don't know how we could do those things, but you know, really those -- if you look at other professions that are in the sciences or engineering, they get paid while they're interning and they get nicely compensated for it. And so those are some of the things that I wanted to bring up in terms of looking at the retention and diversity. Thank you.

DR. GARCIA: Thank you, Representative Curry. So let me begin in reverse order of the topics. So dual enrollment is one of the proven college affordability strategies and one of the biggest initiatives that we can use in order to increase young people's and high school student's awareness of what it's like to go to college in order to encourage them to keep going after they graduate. And so as I understand it, we used to support LEAs and community colleges in terms of funding for dual enrollment here in Pennsylvania, but that funding has not been available for several years. And so we would be delighted to engage with you on conversations on that topic.

And please forgive me if I forget some of the topics you raised. Part of what you mentioned about
trauma-informed approaches to instruction, that is not only necessary for all future educators but also existing educators, right, because we have a responsibility to learn more about who our students are and what environments they're coming to us from and to be able to identify what are some of those traumas that might prevent them from really advancing and -- in their educational pursuits.

And so part of the Chapter 49 regulations that were approved last week are an effort to build cultural awareness and trauma-informed approaches and practices, and so we'll be working with our educator prep programs, many of which are already engaged in these efforts to see what we can do to increase that professional learning and capacity that all current and future educators need. And let me ask Dr. Helm for a moment to expand on that?

Because he was a part of the Chapter 49 conversations since before I was -- I joined the department. And then I'll come back and talk about equity, inclusion, and belonging at the agency.

DR. HELM: I would just like to mention, to just follow up with -- Dr. Garcia has given a really broad answer, here -- is there are two things as I mentioned before with Chapter 354. We're about to engage on some serious discussions that will involve stakeholders about educator preparation in this state. The second thing
that -- large project that we're also engaged in is the Educator Workforce Strategy project, which was alluded to earlier, and these are the types of discussions that we're going to have regarding the educator workforce and including all of those things that you mentioned because that's where we need to be.

And so in the next few months, we're going to be bringing this educator workforce strategy out and getting more feedback, and we're going to have larger discussions around it, and it's going to inform a lot of the things that we pursue forward with addressing the educator workforce in the state. So it's a good time to be talking about these things because there's a lot of things that are happening now that we all can be part of and will make a, you know, pretty significant difference, I believe.

DR. GARCIA: To your first point -- so what we have learned -- let me just back up a little bit and say that the importance of social emotional learning and supports within our educator profession could not be more important than it is today, you know, during the pandemic, and so we have school counselors, school psychologists, and school social workers. The social workers are our newest certification. All three educator types are really becoming part of the student support staff that enhances what's happening in the classroom, and obviously, school
leaders and teachers are all involved more and more in providing social and emotional learning and supports to students.

PDE as an agency and the senior leadership team, while we don't have an official equity, inclusion, and belonging officer at the senior leadership team, we do have special assistants and staff who are focusing on increasing equity, inclusion, and belonging so that students can have safe environments within which to learn.

And so those are efforts -- and you know, we have learned from many superintendents across the Commonwealth who are really trying to create environments where all students feel like they belong and where they can, you know, create these safe spaces for students to really thrive when it comes to learning and to really not focus on anything else because anything else is a detraction from, you know, shaping and forming these young minds. So we welcome any input from yourself and other members of the general assembly on whether we should have a more formal position within the PDE senior team around equity, inclusion, and belonging. Thank you.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Dr. Williams, did you want to provide any input?

DR. WILLIAMS: Yes. Thank you. I want to circle back to Representative Curry's statement about the trauma
that some -- that many African-American and BIPOC students find in their K-12 experiences. That's actually some of the conversations that we are having with some of our district partners of, why would I want to go back and teach in a district that has disenfranchised me for the past 12 years? That's the million dollar question. And so looking at that and really taking a deeper dive into the -- what's the root cause of that and how can we address those? And I think that's the real question that we need to address.

Chapter 49 gives us an opportunity -- looking at the cultural sustaining education part of Chapter 49, it talks about a cultural awareness, but I argue that we need to go beyond an awareness and into culturally-sustaining and cultural-relevant pedagogies. How we teach in the classroom? How do we get to the needs of the students in the way we teach the content, dispositions, and skills so that they can move into being in positions as teachers as leaders with -- inside of our communities? Thank you.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: And Dr. Ward?

DR. WARD: I wanted to echo that and say that Chapter 49 requires higher education to revise our curriculum to help teachers become -- teaching ways that are culturally sustaining, but we need help with it. We're going to do it, but we could do it well, or we could do it, you know, not quite as well. We need support. And so I
support the idea of a new office in PDE that has leadership in that area. Higher education could use a little bit of help from PDE on that -- in that regard.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: And for the last question on this panel for Dr. Ward, just wondering if you could share either any recommendations or frustrations that you're hearing from your members? You know, you are -- your members are the teachers that are teaching the perspective new teachers, and so I would assume that you would have some feedback from those educators dealing with either their frustrations and/or recommendations.

DR. WARD: So I'm going to answer it a little differently than you asked and end on a positive note. We are seeing a little uptick here at Kutztown University in the number of new students coming into education in the last couple years and moving forward. And I think part of that is due to the improving job environment, but it's also because there's a fundamental reason people go into teaching, and it's always been true and it's still true even though there is some demoralization in the profession, and that is people want to make an impact on students.

And teacher educators are forward-looking people. They think about the future. They're excited about the future. So that's still true. And as long as we put in some changes to support better preparation for diverse
students and recruiting more students into the pipeline, I think the teacher shortage will gradually be addressed.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Thank you. And again, I'd like to thank the first panel for being here with us today and sharing the information, answering our questions. We'll move on to the second panel.

We have one change in the second panel. Because we are running a little bit later, we're going to be moving up some from the last panel. So the second panel will consist of Dr. John Sanville, the superintendent of Unionville-Chadds Ford School District, also Dr. Leon Poeske, who is the administrative director of Bucks County Technical High School. And then, also moving up will be Vicki Truchan, a teacher at North Hills School District. If all those on the second panel could please stand and raise your right hand.

(Oath administered)

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Thank you. You can be seated.

Dr. Hennie, you can begin.

Dr. Sanville.

DR. SANVILLE: Thank you. Chairman Sonney, Chairman Longietti and the distinguished members of the House Education Committee, my name's John Sanville. I'm the superintendent of the Unionville-Chadds Ford School
District and also President Elect of the Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators. I'm here today representing PASA, whose members include school district superintendents, assistant superintendents, executive directors, and other public school leaders from across the Commonwealth. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you today and answer questions. And at this time, I know you have my written remarks. I'll leave them stand and be happy to answer questions as they come.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Go ahead, Mr. Poeske.

DR. POESKE: Hello, everybody. I do have some things I want to highlight from my written comments to all of you. And as I was introduced my name's Leon Poeske. I'm the administrative director at Bucks County Technical High School. I'm also the president of the PACTA organization, the Pennsylvania Association for Career and Technical Administrators. And I'm here to say we certainly need your help because as you know, we have a serious crisis on hand, and I -- there are some differences in the career and technical education world that I want to point out to all of you that are very similar to the academic world but also there are some differences there.

So just in Bucks County alone, there were schools this past year that had to close up because of teacher shortages. Our school, we were on the verge of closing two
times throughout this year due to not having enough
teachers. Now, yes, that was due mainly to COVID and those
situations, but as you all know just not enough people in
the pipeline, teachers, substitutes, et cetera.

And I think you see in the testimony that I
wrote, really over the past 10 years, two-thirds reduction
in teacher certifications in this state, and that's huge,
from 21,000 down to 7,000 over the past 9, 10 years.
That's dramatic. And in speaking to superintendents and my
colleagues throughout the state, it's getting more and more
difficult, and in fact, in the career and technical world,
the CTE world, it's really becoming a crisis. I am very
concerned when our welding teachers or electrical teachers
retire and the candidates or lack thereof that we may be
able to get to fill those positions. It really is a
critical situation. What we do in our world is we train
and education those future workers, the people that we all
hire in our homes and in our companies and our businesses.

We're competing against those people to try to
recruit them back into the teaching world, yet they may be
making $100,000, maybe 60,000 in a bad year. What do we
have to offer in most schools and districts, $50,000, going
back to school, working towards not only your master's
degree but making sure you get your teacher certification
first? In addition, we ask teachers to pay for their
continuing education. Yes, we may pay them upwards to 50 percent. Some school districts and CTEs may pay more than that, but I know one school district is paying $50 a credit up to three credits, $150 for that teacher to get trained furthering his or her education. That's a huge discrepancy, huge discrepancy.

And different from in the academic world most of the teachers we hire are not coming through a teacher program. They're coming from the industry. They may have been laying shingles yesterday, and we're hiring them to be in front of 25, 30 kids the next day as a teacher. Now, we hire them under an emergency certification process. That's great. But then we ask them, they need to start going back to school. They're teaching, they're going back to school, and most of these people have -- they're older in their career. They are the second-career people, and that really is difficult.

And by way of example in terms of tuition -- I know I looked these up before I put that in my testimony, but Penn State for a three-credit course undergraduate's about $2,400 if you include the fees, so that's that. And regardless, we always talk about how teaching is a calling and yes, it is a calling. I love the profession. I'm an educator by profession. I came up through the ranks. And as wonderful as that is, there's a huge discrepancy between
the salary commensurate with what is going on in the world that I'm bringing people in. But also we're asking them to put out money to do this job.

As the president of the organization now, I get a chance to talk to a lot of colleagues throughout the state. A colleague of mine in the Western PA, he could not find a technical teacher. He almost had to close his program this past year because he couldn't find a teacher that was certified or even close to being certified in that area. He had the number of students. It was a great program, you know, good-paying jobs that kids could get afterwards, but he almost had to close. Now, thank God he did not have to do that. So that's just an example of where we stand.

Another thing that I did want to point out that is different in the academic -- tech versus academic world is most -- Pennsylvania does not have reciprocity with even the neighboring states in terms of teacher certification. So one of the things that I highlighted in the testimony is someone who I know, a culinary teacher, he came from the state of Maryland. He was named teacher of the year in the state of Maryland, taught there for 10 years, wants to move back to Pennsylvania where he's from, wife is from. He says, well, how tough can this be if I just come back to Pennsylvania? I've been teaching for 10 years. I'm teacher of the year. I have all these credentials. He had
to start from ground zero.

The state, our state, did not recognize him for being a culinary teacher, given all his accolades. So he had to start -- now, thank God he stuck it out and he's with us and teaching kids and that's great, but that is few and far between, few and far between.

And another hurdle that I see -- and this has been mentioned from the higher ed folks, and that is some of the teachers needing to take a competency test even though, if you look at their credentials in the review of, say, their resume, how they're -- I used a master mechanic, ASE master mechanic, 8 to 10 certifications, been in the business for a long time. He or she may, then, have to go back -- even though you have all these credentials -- to take what's called an Occupational Competency Assessment to see if he or she is certified in that -- is qualified in that area, whereas a simple review of the resume could do the job. So I just wanted to point those out.

And lastly, there's just some things that I think we could look at -- we could look at. One is maybe just reducing or easing some of the requirements that PDE has in place for teachers. Other states have less -- I heard it said before, other states have less stringent requirements, and I know that's a fine line. We want quality teachers. Of course I want quality people in front of our kids, you
know, but other states are doing some various things to bring more teachers into the pipeline.

Secondly, the reciprocity, look at that among states in the CTE world. I know it's pretty common in the academic world. Third, maybe some sort of tuition forgiveness. I know we have the Federal Tuition Forgiveness Program, but that's if you're working in a lower-income school district. How about making that not just for CTE teachers but academic teachers, too? That could be an area to bring more people in. And certainly I, my colleagues in the CTE world, and PACTA, we would certainly be willing to sit down and work through many of these issues that are here in front of us today because I think if we don't do that, it's only going to get worse.

You know how well CTE, Career and Technical Education, has done in Pennsylvania. I think it's not only, obviously, going to hurt our kids, but it's going to hurt the economy moving forward. Thank you.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Thank you. Ms. Truchan, did you want to have any opening statement, or? You're muted.

MS. TRUCHAN: There we go. Can you hear me now?

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Yes.

MS. TRUCHAN: You would think after teaching on Zoom for all of this time that I would know to unmute
myself. Good morning, Chairman Sonney, Chairman Longietti, and members of the House Education Committee. My name is Vicki Truchan, and I'm an eighth grade English teacher at North Hills Middle School in Alleghany County. I am really, truly honored to be here today to speak on behalf of the teachers in our state and on behalf of the Pennsylvania State Education Association.

Currently, I serve as a volunteer to PSEAs new Substitute Teacher Taskforce, and although the taskforce has not begun its work yet I have already heard from many of my colleagues about the impact of staffing shortages in our public schools. And suffice it to say the Commonwealth's education workforce we're really facing a full-blown crisis. The substitute shortage that I have been tasked with examining is just the most glaring symptom of a much bigger problem. With that reality in mind, thank you for hosting this important conversation and for inviting educators like me to share our perspectives.

First, I want to begin by saying, we really desperately need your support. Yes, we need your support to enact policies that will help us rebuild and strengthen the educator pipeline. But more importantly as our elected leaders, we need your encouragement and public support because frankly, too many of us have been feeling devalued and disrespected for a long time. Even before the
During the height of the pandemic, teachers were unfairly portrayed as not working, when in fact, I know for myself and for all of my colleagues, we are working harder than ever to support our students and deliver quality instruction in a way that we had never had to do so before. Without a doubt, the pandemic presented the most difficult time in teachers lives.

So I'm in my 14th year at North Hills and being an educator literally runs in my blood. My other was a teacher. My father was a teacher. My stepmother is a teacher. My sister is a teacher. And I've always loved school and I've always loved learning, so there was never a question as to whether I was going to become a teacher. But if my children came to me today and said they wanted to become teachers, too, I hate to say I'd actually have to advise against it. I mean, that's heartbreaking to me because I have always felt that my purpose in life is to be an excellent teacher because I just want to help students achieve their hopes and dreams.

But unfortunately, I am not the only heartbroken
teacher right now. There is a constant refrain in my school among educators who are nowhere near retirement who are saying, I don't think I can do this for 20 more years; I'm even considering a pay cut if it will reduce my stress. And in listening to my colleagues, there is no doubt that they love their students. They love their contents areas. They love the art of teaching. I do. We all do.

But what teachers are experiencing now in public education it's just not what we signed up for. We're all feeling overwhelmed. We're all feeling burnt out by unending demand, unreasonable expectations to do more and more and more with less and less support. I will refer you to my written testimony for several statements that I have gathered from my fellow educators. It's nothing short of demoralizing to realize the weight of everything that is already expected of us as educators only to be targeted further with new requirements and expectations, extreme scrutiny, and political scapegoating. It's always something. And I do fear that someday soon adding even just one more thing is finally going to become too much even for a veteran teacher like me.

And it's no wonder fewer and fewer young people are aspiring to be educators. Take a moment to consider the cost of higher education and the debt burden that comes with attaining a bachelor's degree, plus the cost
associated with the required practice exam, certification fees, background checks, clearances, post-baccalaureate credit, the cost of keeping our certificates valid and current through professional development, on top of the out-of-pocket expenses for classroom supplies totaling thousands more over the entirety of our careers.

Pennsylvania's educators are held to the highest standard in terms of moral character, preparation, qualifications, and continuing education, as we should be. And finally, I asked you to consider, in my district, first-year teachers, they only earn $35,000.

So as we collectively examine the educator shortage, we must first honestly acknowledge how we got to this crisis point. My written testimony offers more context and detail surrounding the problem along with several evidence-based strategies for your review and consideration. I am definitely not a policy expert. But I do know that until we start trusting and respecting educators and treating us as the professionals we are, this crisis will persist and worsen. Please listen to what educators are asking for instead of piling on even one more thing for us to comply with.

In closing, I want you all to know that receiving the invitation to present here, it represents one of the few times that I have felt valued and respected as a
professional educator because I know you're here and you're listening to me. Thank you very much for this opportunity. And I will do my best to answer any questions that you might have.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Thank you. I'll start out with the first question. And I think it was Dr. Poeske that you mentioned about the increase in pay, in other words, in order to get substitutes, you've doubled or tripled the amount that you were paying; is that correct?

MS. TRUCHAN: Pay for substitutes?

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: This question is for the panel that's present in the room.

MS. TRUCHAN: Okay.

DR. POESKE: And I can tell you just from our situation at Unionville-Chadds Ford, and it's -- you're seeing the same refrain across the Commonwealth, not being able to find substitute teachers. And we have had to increase pay for substitute teachers to compete, and it becomes a dog chasing its tail because we raise our rates, neighboring districts, neighboring counties raise their rates, and it's just all in an effort to recruit an ever-diminishing substitute pool.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: And do you think you've crossed the tipping point, so to speak, on that level of pay that it becomes more lucrative just to quit
teaching and just do the substitute world because in the
der end you're going to make as much or more money without all
of the headaches, you know? And we're seeing this in other
professions. We're seeing it a lot in nursing today, in
traveling nurses, you know, because it eliminates all the
headaches and it's a lot more money, you know. Are we
having any fear of going into that type of a situation?

DR. POESKE: I don't see that. No. I can tell
you in Chester County, you're seeing an average substitute
pay of $130 a day, right. That doesn't include benefits.
Certainly, to be a certified, full-time teacher with
benefits is -- from a cost analysis is a better deal,
right? But I think the question is, is how do we increase
the pool? I think that, you know, the -- you know, and
I'll pile on, on some of the testimony you've already heard
in terms of the difficulty of getting certified in
Pennsylvania and what we see in other jurisdictions, other
states that surround us.

I came from Virginia and I had a doctorate from
the University of Virginia, and I came to Pennsylvania and
I wasn't eligible to be a superintendent here. Even though
I'm very proud of that degree, didn't qualify me to be --
to receive a letter of eligibility from the Commonwealth of
Pennsylvania. And as you've heard from others, that's a
pretty common occurrence. I think that we thank the
General Assembly for what you've done to provide us some avenues to get substitute teachers that are maybe in the pipeline and don't have the certifications yet. That is certainly helpful, and I think we need to look at other ways to open the door for others that may have alternative pathways to teaching from a certification standpoint and also can provide us an increased substitute teacher pool.

MR. SONNEY: Would you characterize the substitute teachers as more very short term, day here, day there, or would you characterize them more as more longer term, like two-week stretches or longer?

DR. SANVILLE: It's both. It's both, because you might -- you might have a teacher that goes on leave, maternity leave, or some type of leave that you have a substitute teacher in that classroom, a day-to-day substitute that covers three, four, five, six weeks at a time. So you have that. You have the -- just the run of the mill garden variety don't feel well, teacher doesn't come in, you need a substitute, but the impact of the pool I think is greater than just -- than just that, because let's just think about, you know, you hear about shortages across the board in education. It's across all job categories. I can tell you that in -- across the Commonwealth, in the 500 districts, you're seeing teachers giving up their planning periods to cover -- to cover
classes, so they're working. They don't have time to plan. Chairman Longietti, you talked about some of the Asian models where it's called polishing the stone where you give teachers time to plan. Our teachers are giving up their planning in order to cover their colleagues classes. I can tell you that you are seeing administrators across the Commonwealth serving lunches, driving buses. I've done both myself this year because -- and it's a situation that is not sustainable. We can -- we can make it work for now. We cannot make it work long-term, and so I think that anything that we can do, any mandate relief, any ways to open the door to allow us to get more people in the door will be -- will really benefit all the school districts.

MR. SONNEY: Do you think that there could be a difference in the level of education, let's say between the substitute that would be just there for the day, you know, as compared to that more longer term substitute where absolutely, you know, we want a good high quality teacher in there, but for those day-to-day occurrences where you know, hopefully, the lesson has already been planned ahead anyway and, like you said, you need a body in there.

DR. SANVILLE: Well I'll just give you two examples. So we have had an open business teacher position and an open technology teacher position that we have posted and reposted and reposted and so during that period of
time, months, literally months, we have had substitute teachers in there, not certified in business, not certified in technology and that -- that has not been a great situation for the students in that class. I mean, there's no -- there's no other way to say it. And I've had to tell that to parents, to agree with them, this is not a great situation and so we look at Representative Topper brought up people who are in business who may have a skill set to come in to teaching and I've hired folks that have been willing to go through the process, that have come from business. They're fantastic. And is there a way to give people who have those life experiences a doorway to getting into the classroom rather than the process that we have now. And I think that as a Commonwealth, we just have to realize right now that the rules, the game around us has changed, and I think that we have to be open to changing our -- the way we do business because the world around us has changed, and so the competition for people, the -- the way that we certify folks, the way that we attract people into education, I think we really need to be purposeful, because clearly what we're doing now is not working, but we've got to do it differently.

MR. SONNEY: No you're fine. I mean, that's what we're here for. Right. You know, we want to hear it.

DR. SANVILLE: One last thing is that people --
people come into education, you know, some people are coin
operated, right, they -- they come into -- they go into
professions for money. I think more often than not, we
want to have people that come into education because they
care about children. And the -- which has been -- which
was said earlier, and so the most important thing in a
child's education in terms of how they learn and their
experience: One, it has been said many times is that they
have a teacher in front of them that looks like them. That
is vitally important. But the next thing is, the
relationship that the teacher has with the students, and I
think that we have to look at how we -- and it's not just
teachers, but everyone that -- that's working in education
is what their work experience is like, what are the things
that are there for them, and I'm not talking about
benefits, I'm not talking about, hey I'm just talking about
how we value the educators or bus drivers or -- or personal
care assistants across the board so that they feel valued.
I think that is vitally important and that's really a top
down indeavor I believe.

MR. SONNEY: Chairman Longietti.

MR. LONGIETTI: Thank you all. Two areas I want
to explore. One is a couple of you mentioned in your
written testimony about the need for mental health and
emotional support personnel and I had a question from one
of my colleagues a few days ago; is there anything in the budget proposal that deals with that, and at least from what I gleaned, I guess it cuts either way right. So on the one end the budget proposal is a very significant increase in basic education funding. I'll see where we actually end up, but I didn't see anything specific there. That gives the school districts flexibility on how to use that money. They could use it for mental health or emotional support potentially if they received a large increase. So, you know, what do you think ought to be done there? Should we have something specifically directed towards that to require, you know, school districts to use moneys in that way or should it be more flexible, and then I guess, number 2, and at least Dr. Poeske has given us some insight on this; if you were king or queen what would you do? What are the one, two or three things that you would change?

DR. POESKE: Certainly I think with the dollars, flexibility is going to be more critical for us. You know, Dr. Sanville's school district may need something different than what we need. I will say we are using federal dollars right now as our funds for mental health issues, but that's a stop gap. I mean, that money is going to dry up and then that will hit us locally. Okay, so flexibility I think would be critical with those dollars versus earmarking them
specifically for one thing or another. And the second part was --

MR. LONGIETTI: Yeah and I think you kind of gave us yours already. You know, the things that you would change.

MR. POESKE: Right. Right.

MR. LONGIETTI: You talked about reciprocity, you talked about -- (indiscernible - simultaneous speech)

MR. POESKE: You know the Act 1 issue is certainly hitting all of us. I spoke to the superintendents that feed into my school just yesterday and they are feeling that the incredible amount of money that we are all paying for the appeasers system along with the Act 1 limitation, I know in that situation I would love to raise teacher's salaries. Certainly so would our association love to have teacher's salaries raised, but that's going to come at a cost. I'm not going to be able to stay within the Act 1 index and still buy all the things I need for kids to learn appropriately.

DR. SANVILLE: In 2020 there was a joint state government commission on the mental health care workforce shortage, and quite frankly I think the conversation is the same and there are a number of recommendations in that document -- I have it here -- that talks about how, and I think that the answers that you see here in the joint state
commission are similar and can be applied to teacher shortages. So, and I'll just give you some ideas and some of which are right here is loan forgiveness programs, some of which already exist by the way, and there could be maybe an increase in funding for those line items that are already in the Commonwealth's budget that you get loan forgiveness for an extended period, three, four, five years working in a school district. If you want to look at, for instance, a grow-your-own program and I appreciate that there's a dirth of research relative to grow-your-own programs, but I just have to think prima fascia that if you have a child in your school district who is engaged and he has good relationships with adults in the building and you encourage him or her to go into education and then maybe there's a scholarship program maybe set up similar to the academies or ROTC that college can be augmented or paid for in return for a period of time, three, four, five years of work in the field, and then once you have somebody in and they see that it, especially if you're growing your own and they're coming back to the schools that they worked in to make a difference. I think that, and again, you know, suggestions like this are in the joint commission so those are just a couple of ideas for you.

CHAIRMAN LONGIETTI: Just, you know, wanted to engage our virtual Ms. Truchan if she's still available.
MS. TRUCHAN: I'm here.

CHAIRMAN LONGIETTI: Mental health and what would you do if you were queen?

MS. TRUCHAN: Oh if I were the queen, I would do a lot of things. I've really seen a difference in the mental health of our students this year and I hate to even say that they have more needs than I have ever seen. Our district has taken the great step of hiring more school psychologists, which has been very helpful, but besides that even, the school psychologists aren't in the buildings in the grades. They're doing a lot of their testing. What we really need is more counselors. We have a counselor for each grade, sixth, seventh, and eighth, in my middle school, and I have to tell you that there's more need than even that those three hardworking wonderful people can do to get to all of the students that they need to help so personally, if I were queen, I would get another counselor or two in every building just to help out this massive mental health need that we have after COVID.

CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Representative Topper.

MR. TOPPER: Thank you Mr. Chairman. I really am intrigued by the idea of reciprocity for states in terms of especially CTE so Dr. Poeske I think, you know, I'll certainly be looking into that and I think that's a very good idea. Is it, and maybe this is best for Dr. Sanville,
is it as easy to find -- and I know it's not easy to find anybody necessarily at this point, but I think we need to be looking also at specifics of where this teacher shortage is hitting us, whether it be CTE, maybe if people we can bring directly in the field. In other words, you know, it seems to be that I represent 10 school districts, which is a pretty large group. You know, when they have an opening for a third grade elementary school teacher, then they have enough applicants. Not as many as they used to, but they still have enough to find candidates, but when they have a high school science opening, they can't find anybody. So do we need to be looking at specifics in terms of recruitment for subjects or areas or is it truly the same as, look it's as tough finding middle school phys ed teacher as it is a physics teacher in high school?

DR. SANVILLE: No. You're spot on. There are certain categories that to find, and I will also put world language in there, very difficult to find world language teachers, difficult to find a physics teacher, elementary teachers, high school social studies, which I was a high school social studies teacher. There's a lot of them out there, right, and so if you want to fabricate or look at ways to recruit teachers, there are high needs areas; there's no doubt about it.

REPRESENTATIVE TOPPER: Yeah I think that's
important for us to look at and for PDE to look at as well as we try and examine how to attack this. We might need a little bit of a surgical approach as well, you know, at first. I mean my dad was a high school social studies teacher for over 30 years and he and his buddies got into teaching because after they were done playing college football, they looked around and said well we want to coach. And at the time, if you wanted to coach you got into teaching. They got into teaching and he was inducted last year into the Bedford Area High School Education Hall of Fame. He was one of the, you know. I still have people that'll come to my office and say, I never liked history until I had your dad. And he made history come alive for them. They loved him and he didn't even think about getting into teaching except that he wanted to coach, which brings me to my point of, you know, I think we also have to understand that in the past teaching was also associated with extracurricular activities. And do you still see that as much, because I know myself I coach for Bedford football. It used to be, you know, it was very uncommon to have a lot of coaches that were not in the district. Now you're seeing that more and more. Does that also have a little bit of a correlation to what we're talking about?

DR. SANVILLE: Well first of all, congratulations to your father. He must be quite a man. Those things
don't happen by accident. I will tell you this that the experience that a child has after school, whether it's on the field or on stage or in the musical, in the band, and they spend a lot of time at school after school rather than during the day and so I think it's really important in terms of training that we provide and the recruitment that we take and do to recruit good people to be in front of our kids after school as much as we do during the day. We have at Unionville-Chadds Ford -- our goal is to have every child involved in some type of activity after school, because that engagement -- once you're engaged in the community in some way like that, you have buy in and so how do we promote our teaching force in our community that'll come in to do that and to promote that in our kids and so, I guess to your question, and I will say this, we do not hire a coach to be a teacher, right. We hire teachers first and we like our teachers to be involved with the kids after school because that's, you know, as we all think back, you bring your football days, you tend to remember more that event on stage and being on a team than you do sitting (indiscernible - simultaneous speech)

REPRESENTATIVE TOPPER: Sure, but I think that all plays into what we're talking about with mental health as well. You know, we took away those opportunities for a year and a half and some of us fought extremely hard
against that, not because I have a special affinity for
football, although I do, but it's also the idea that a lot
of what we're dealing with in this mental health space was
predicted. You know, because we did not let these kids
experience what they needed to experience in addition to
just learning, you know, what they were learning in the
classroom, so I think the more we can make that commitment
including with our faculty and in our recruitment, I think
it's a good thing. Actually, you know, we have teachers
who I think could be encouraged if they were also going to
do more and help out whether it be with a reading club or
whether it be with, you know, music or whether it be with
any of their passions that they can also fulfill those
passions in teaching through helping these kids fulfill
theirs. I think that's an important component as well.

DR. SANVILLE: Yeah, I think that's fair. I also
think we should be honest with ourselves that the mental
health crisis really began before COVID. COVID did not
help; I agree with that. It made matters worse, but we had
issues before, and we all know that. We can look at our
Pennsylvania Youth Survey data that'll tell us that. We
look at the Joint Government Commission in 2020 that was
commissioned in '19, report came out in '20. We were
seeing this before COVID, so COVID didn't help but I think
when you look at the root cause of things, it's not just
COVID from a mental health perspective; there are other
things that are there foundationally in our nation that's
causing a mental health crisis.

REPRESENTATIVE TOPPER: Thank you. Thank you Mr.
Chairman.

CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Representative Curry.

REPRESENTATIVE CURRY: Thank you Chairman. I
just want to say thank you for your testimony and I know
that in education there's all brothers and sisters and, you
know, superintendents have been teachers. Most times
they've worked up the rank and they can really see the
scope of what their entire district looks like, but I want
us to recognize today too that no one on that panel is
representing school districts like the school districts
that I represent either. Now you may have been in those
school districts before, but I know about Unionville, and
Unionville is a really nice place to live and they have
really nice schools. I want us to, you know, just think
for a moment about a term that I taught sociology for a
long time. It's a word that if you look it up in an Urban
dictionary it's called weathering and weathering is a term
that the teacher who spoke a few moments ago, she talked
about weathering as a teacher. And it's really important
for us to understand it is when you have had exposure to
the same atmosphere and it wears you down over time and so
I would encourage all of us to think about that. You know, the various school districts that lie within the Commonwealth, there are different issues and different problems throughout all of them. The issue is teacher shortage, but we do have to look at like Chairman Longietti said, the flexibility and where we would put those dollars is what you talked about. Absolutely, we need to have that flexibility because there's different districts that have different needs. And so when we think about these teachers right now, I want us to walk away from here thinking about weathering, thinking about not the fact that we have to educate our children, but the fact that weathering is a situation that needs funding. Weathering is a situation that needs more funding, because when you're in certain buildings, you're in certain communities where the needs are so overwhelming you can't even think about teaching that day because you are a social worker, you're a counselor, you're mommy, you're daddy, you're all of that all in one and you're putting out so many fires in a day that the education becomes secondary, so yes, we have to think about that in this teacher shortage space. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Yes. Go ahead doctor.

DR. SANVILLE: I'd just like to respond, and I think that your remarks are fair, and I will say this, I
think in relation to COVID, COVID really exposed across the Commonwealth the haves and the half nots. And in terms of access to resources, however you want to define resources, internet, one-to-one capability, the number of staff members to address mental health needs of students and I think that that is true. Unionville-Chadds Ford is in Chester County and we are very fortunate. That is absolutely true. But I'm here to represent school districts that are not so fortunate, that don't have internet, the principals and superintendents have to drive from their home to school just to get emails over safe-to-safe tips because they don’t have access to it any other way over the weekends, so we are all in different situations, but the disparity between the have and the have nots was certainly exposed over COVID.

CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Representative Gillen.

REPRESENTATIVE GILLEN: I'm over here in the cheap seats. Dr. Poeske, I'll direct this question to you. Bucks County Technical School, I graduated from Pennsbury High School, same neighborhood. I was reflecting just for a few moments here because my dad taught adult education at the Bucks County Technical High School. I think it had a slightly different name in those days more than 45 years ago. He had not finished the 10th grade. There was a war that needed to fought back in the '40's, but he had the
(indiscernible), and I appreciate the fact that you still value it today and that is experience. And he was a highly technical person. I took the opportunity a few moments ago to go to your website and I saw there were some openings, instructional facilitator, for example and a building substitute and the instructional facilitator requires two years AA, you know, commence or experience and if this is current, the salary was 15.50 an hour and the building substitute was $150 a day. I have five daughters and they're out in the workforce at various levels mostly on a part-time basis, but if I look at what retailers are paying, Dunkin Donuts, etcetera, are you able to recruit the talent that you're looking for at that salary?

DR. POESKE: No. That's why we're here. There's a teacher shortage and I think pay is the number one issue, and I don't really know legislatively how that could be resolved, but that's a huge issue so our instructional facilitators are in generic terms paraeducators, you know supporting the kids, supporting the teachers.

REPRESENTATIVE GILLEN: What do you think it would take salary wise in this environment to recruit the talent you're looking for; is there a number or hearing more, but is there a sweet spot or is it a much bigger issue than dollars?

DR. POESKE: Well, I think it's going to depend
on where we live in the Commonwealth. We just heard the
teacher from North Allegheny starting salaries at 35,000.
We in Bucks County and southeast PA it's much more than
that, so it's going to be relative to the area, but I think
some of the benefit, as we've all said, I think all of you
have heard this in other testimonies; teachers, we go into
this business because we love it, we love working with
kids, whether we're teachers, administrators, coaching,
paraeducators, lunch room people, they want to be around
kids so what are some of the other things we can do to
help? So obviously salary is one, but again, if you look
at some sort of tuition reimbursement, tuition forgiveness,
like Dr. Sanville said, three to five years in the school
that's repaid. People are attracted to that. I see our
staff attracted to that. We have some teachers that live
right along the Delaware River, you know, you go any
further east you're in New Jersey. We have teachers who
live there work in Pennsylvania. They have to, in the CTE
world, if you're in the eastern region you pretty much have
to go to Temple University to get your certification.
They're paying out-of-state tuition even though raised in
Bucks County. In fact, it's a Bucks County graduate, Bucks
County Technical High School graduate, now he's back to
teach. We worked something out with our Teacher
Association where we're essentially subsidizing that out-
of-state tuition. So if it can be done locally, let's look
more broadly from a state perspective on assistance there.

REPRESENTATIVE GILLEN: Yeah. I appreciate you
highlighting the love for the profession. I was Act 48
certified for many years. I was never full-time in the
classroom, but I did a substantial amount of guest teaching
and I was certainly impressed with the dedication and the
love from the students that those teachers had in the
schools that I had worked in. My dad certainly wasn't
there for any other reason than to share his experience and
his love for the students. I wasn't in the area anymore at
the time when he was teaching, but as I saw a picture of
him in the classroom, nobody was more shocked than me that
a guy who grew up the way that the did, you know, 10th
grade was all he went to, was in a teaching situation. Is
Ms. Vicki still on with us? I just had a brief question.
She's no longer. Okay.

CHAIRMAN SONNEY: No.

REPRESENTATIVE GILLEN: Thank you Mr. Chairman.

I appreciate it.

CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Thank you. I would like to
again thank the testifiers on the second panel.
Unfortunately I think Vicki had to get back to work, but we
very much appreciate you being here today and taking the
time to give us some information, so thank you very much.
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you everybody.

CHAIRMAN SONNEY: We have one final panel. Hopefully they're still with us. Dr. Amanda Hill-Hennie, the principal for Memphis Street Academy, and Mary Jo Walsh the principal at Fell Charter School.

MS. WALSH: This is Mary Jo and I'm still here.

CHAIRMAN SONNY: Okay. Go ahead. Come on over. Might as well just stay standing for a second. Could you both please stand and raise your right hand?

(Oath administered.)

CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Thank you. You may be seated. Dr. Hennie. If you would like to begin with any opening remarks, you may.

DR. HILL-HENNIE: Certainly. Good morning Chair Sonney, Chair Longietti, and members of the House of Education Committee. My name is Dr. Amanda Hill-Hennie and I'm a principal at Memphis Street Academy Charter School, which is in Philadelphia. Thank you for giving your time and attention to the dire issue of the teacher shortage in Pennsylvania, therefore, affording me the opportunity to provide in-person testimony.

I am currently a principal at Memphis Street Academy, which is a charter school serving roughly 600 scholars in grades 5 through 8; 86 percent of these scholars qualify for free or reduced lunch. I am also a
member of the Pennsylvania Educator Diversity Consortium, an organization designed to increase the number of diverse educators in Pennsylvania schools. In my role as a school administrator, I have seen firsthand the impact that teacher shortages can have on the student experience.

Currently I have seven substitutes providing instruction to scholars who are not certified teachers. These individuals are working in the capacity of a full-time teacher due to an inability to fill the position with certified teachers. The issue of teacher shortages in Pennsylvania is critical and greatly impacts a variety of stakeholders.

The stakeholders who suffer the most from the teacher shortage are the K-12 students in the state of Pennsylvania. Additionally, K-12 students in high poverty and high minority schools typically feel the largest impact of teacher shortages. That's all I have for my opening remarks.

CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Thank you. Mary Jo Walsh, do you have any opening remarks you would like to give?

MS. WALSH: I do. Thank you very much. Good morning Chairman Sonny, Chairman Longietti, members of the House of Education Committee. I am Mary Jo Walsh and I have the privilege of being the principal at the Fell Chart School, which is a kindergarten through eighth grade
elementary school located in Simpson, Pennsylvania. We are an amazingly successful small and diverse school located in northeastern Pennsylvania that primarily serves financially struggling families who want a great education for their children. Most of our parents have a minimum of a high school diploma and they want more skills and opportunities for their children.

I've been blessed to be the leader of this school for the last 16 years and over these years, I have done my best to recruit, train, and retain exemplary teachers who are willing to go beyond the normal expectations of teaching to make connections with students, engage students in active learning, and help families work with their children to provide for a solid foundation on which to build their children's academic careers, and that doesn't matter whether it is postsecondary schooling, trades, military, or other choices. Our goal is for our graduates to lead productive and contributing lives to be global members of society.

Over the last two years, we have struggled as many of my counterparts have to secure and retain quality teachers, substitute teachers and staff willing to meet the needs of our students in our building. For me this task has been humbling, exhausting, and sadly out of my control no matter what I do or no matter what I have done. It has
been humbling for me to sit with teachers who have
dedicated years of service to our school or the teacher
profession in general. I've watched them struggle with the
decision to leave our students, to leave teaching, and to
walk away from a passionate mission of teaching due to the
ravages of the pandemic. They had fears of being in a
school and becoming ill, fears of leaving their loved ones
alone or bringing the disease home to them, and fears of
just the day-to-day stress of the pandemic hanging over
their heads.

These men and women struggled to say good-bye to
our students knowing that our students come to school for
the safety and consistency and the familiar face who really
knows them and how to meet their unique needs. It has been
humbling for me to watch the decision-making process and in
the end it was heartbreaking to watch them move on with no
plan to return.

In my school, 80 percent of my staff exited. It
has been exhausting for all of us being in a building day
to day, securing the academic needs, social needs, mental
health needs, physical health, food security, clothing
needs, and safety of our students on top of teaching,
meeting standards, and being accountable to charter school
regulations. This pandemic has forever changed the job
description of teachers, staff, administrators, and
parents.

We are more than ever reflecting on Maslow's Hierarchy. We can't even begin to get to teaching even though our students are so far behind and need us more than ever to be present in the classroom until we satisfy their basic needs of food, clothing, and supplies for school. We are double-timing our work with our students to secure these basic needs. We are communicating with families and then we're teaching. The lines of what teaching is and what teaching is not have become blurred.

In previous years, we all had truly clear roles on how to function in our job, how to contribute to the school as a classroom, and we were working in and planning each day for tomorrow. Everyone is now responsible for everything. Double duty does not even cove what we are asking people to do. Principals are teachers, teachers are lunch staff, janitors are hall monitors, and unless every single one of us is giving 110 percent, our school day doesn't work. We are burdening an already overburdened staff because we have no choice.

It is painful to keep asking teachers and staff to do more, but we have no choice. We are compromising in areas of high needs, most especially in the need of mental health for students and their families as well as academic tutoring and small group mental health groups because our
choices are limited. Not only are we compromising, but we no room for error anymore.

Teaching has become more than what we teach and learn in a classroom. The role as a teacher has become a totally encompassing job to be someone completely responsible for a classroom of precious human beings for seven and a half hours a day. Teachers are teaching, they are triaging students and families, and treating mental health crises because we have to.

We desperately need your help. Our teachers are burning out. They are stressed by the extra work they are doing. They need mental health support. They need time to plan together; they need a prep time to prepare engaging lessons. The bright lights of our teachers are being dimmed by the need to do everything for our children and worry about themselves last.

My question is how do we recruit for that job? How do we retain people for that kind of a job? When will our teachers get time to take care of themselves. We need to remember that most of them leave their job at school to go home to family members and other people who mean a great deal to them. We have truly come to a point of no return and our students are paying a dear price for our inability to fix this problem.

As I noted earlier, this is all sadly out of my
control as an administrator and I don't mean that in a Machiavellian way; I mean that there are no people willing to come to be interviewed that I can even offer them more money to or offer a better schedule to. There's no one to make an offer to. Our school, like many others, has been recruiting, advertising, and working with agencies all to staff our buildings and success has been elusive. We're losing teachers to other industries and professions and why wouldn't any other profession or industry want to hire a teacher.

Teachers are dedicated, compassionate, and detail oriented. They are a perfect candidate to hire. It is time that we start looking at other professions and industries to recruit those highly skilled people to teach our children now. We need to make pathways to help schools succeed, thrive, and survive. We need people in the field to want to teach working with our students. We need to tap into their knowledge base to make sure that they're trades, skills, and entrepreneurial spirit gets passed on to our next generation of learners. We need to remove barriers to hiring. We need to partner with industries to create pathways for our students to enter the job market, but also for their professionals to enter the teaching profession. We need reciprocal agreements now that may mean that we have to change that we run our schools.
I'm all for making sure that we have strong teacher preparation programs, but it is high time that we be into exploring new options for recruiting. We need something in place now. We can't wait another year or two or our schools will be closed. We are currently in survival mode and the mode below that is failure. We cannot afford to fail our students. We cannot wait years to solve this problem. We need this problem solved now or there won't be a tomorrow of quality education for our students.

Someone asked me last week what I'm afraid of with regard to teaching and learning, and my fear is that we don't have enough dedicated people teaching our students. Our students cannot and will not thrive. Our students won't have the drive to seek more or to seek better. Our students won't have the social skills to be well rounded contributing members of society if they lose quality role models in their classrooms, and most of all, these are the generation of people who will be our leaders, our healthcare workers, and our teachers.

How can we expect more from them in the future if we short change them now. Thank you for your attention to this very important issue and I am happy to answer any questions.

CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Representative Nelson.
REPRESENTATIVE NELSON: Thank you. I would love to ask the two panelists as we are looking and kind of making a plea for assistance in how recruit. Currently I assume are we -- are your districts, are your buildings running significant budget surpluses where vacancies are a bigger concern than financial appropriation?

DR. HILL-HENNE: So at this time the bigger concern is definitely the vacancy. We save money by obviously not paying benefits and things to those individuals who are not filling our spots, so we are sitting with seven vacancies and we have the money to pay them, we just need the people.

MS. WALSH: I would agree that our biggest challenge is staffing. I still have two positions open that have been open since the beginning of the school year.

REPRESENTATIVE NELSON: Thank you. I think one of the points that is important that we talk about here, is again the importance of having quality educators, but so much of the testimony, even from both of the building leaders that we have in this session, have also focused on the work that we are expecting those educators to do, and there's kind of chicken or the egg component that says, well if the work were reasonable, if what we were asking our educators to do was simply reading, writing, and arithmetic, would that pool perhaps be a little bit easier
to solve, would retention issues not be as great, would the
turnover that our educators are seeing not be quite as
significant; that's my theory and so before taking my
theory into legislation, I'm hoping that you all would be
able to continue to expound on that if -- you mentioned
that you have two and seven vacancies.

Do you have two and seven vacancies but my
assumption, again theory, and please, the purpose of this
testimony for me is that you guys can help inform me -- you
have two and seven vacancies, but probably like eight other
positions that you don't even bother trying to fill that
you would otherwise need for social work, for additional
aids, for building subs, etcetera, full-time building subs
that's not within the realm of possibility for your
buildings and your districts?

MS. WALSH: I would say yes. I'm still missing
language people. I'm still missing maintenance. I
probably have about seven other positions that I could
fill, but the two that I need are primary positions.

DR. HILL-HENNE: So my seven vacancies are the
vacancies that we have, they are teaching vacancies and
several of those vacancies are being filled by building
subs who are not certified individuals, and to speak to
your earlier question about if we were just asking them to
do reading, writing, and arithmetic, would they retained,
and I think, as many people have mentioned earlier, I know especially from my school, one of the things that leads to the lack of retention is the lack of understanding of the scholars or the students that they serve. As I mentioned before, we are a very high poverty school and you have to be able to connect and relate to the kids before you can actually teach them the concepts, so they can have the greatest teacher preparation program in the world in terms of their content, but if that preparation program did not allow for them to have trauma informed instruction or (indiscernible) then it just tends to still lead to retention.

REPRESENTATIVE NELSON: So I think it's great that we end with these two, you know, by all expectations, amazing leaders because what we're looking at and we're focusing today on our teacher and substitute shortage and we could also have a bus driver shortage. We could also have school nurse shortage. I mean, the number of shortages in our education system are significant and I think, what I'm hearing, is that they're all playing together, correct?

So our school systems seem to be inadequately funded and because of that, we don't have most of the professionals which makes those that we do have stretch excessively thin to the point where we're saying, okay well how do we get more bodies. But, the problem is that we're
starving a system and when that starts to deteriorate, 
throwing more bodies into a classroom that don't have the 
supports, the training, and the surrounding supports around 
that is woefully inadequate. So some have argued that 
perhaps we're building school systems with the wrong 
objectives.

My argument is that schools and what we're 
providing to our young people, the way we're investing in 
our young people, so I won't use the word criminal because 
I'm a legislator, but it's brutal right now, and I thank 
you all. Please go back to your buildings. When you do, 
go back to your folks and tell them that we hear, we see 
it, my wife is an educator and her family are educators. 
We got alums through and through and I know and I know that 
your folks are missing preps and I know that your kids are 
missing most of what they need from the really quality 
people that we put in front of them, and I'd like to say 
the cavalry is coming, but the cavalry is kind of sitting 
in this room and hopefully we can get them energized. 
Thank you.

DR. HILL-HENNE: Thank you.

MS. WALSH: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN SONNEY: You know there are no other 
members that have questions and, you know. Sure.

REPRESENTATIVE CURRY: So I'd be remiss if I didn’t
talk to you doctor, because when we look at the charter school system and how -- I had two openings. One opening in my office and two young people who applied for it who were teaching at charter schools in Philadelphia. It broke my heart that they were coming to apply for a constituent services position, but you know what it was, it wasn't that they were teachers from the start, they left their colleges, not in education, they couldn't find jobs and the charter schools hired them.

The only reason I wanted to make this comment is it broke my heart when I was interviewing. I was like, you can't leave the babies. That's what I said in the interview. But the main reason why I'm saying this is, is because when we are trying to fulfill that shortage, we are pulling folks in that aren't even educators. They're going to leave and guess who suffers? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN SONNEY: I would say one of the overarching themes today have been centered around pathways and retention and so as we wrap this up, I'd like to ask our final two presenters here today if you could speak a little bit on the retention side. You know, we've heard a lot about, you know, ways that we can incentivize them to stay in by creating programs to help with their student loans, but you know, what are the other issues that you hear that are causing teachers to leave the profession?
DR. HILL-HENNE: Teachers leave the profession for a number of reasons. I think one of them is definitely working conditions. Sometimes they have to buy their own paper to make photocopies for their students for the work that they need. Sometimes they have to deal with parents that may not be the same type of parents that raised them and they don't understand like the differences in the parenting styles. Sometimes they're dealing with attendance issues or issues of apathy within the student that they just haven't found the solutions to, and I would put all of those things under working conditions.

Salary sometimes does play a role, it does. I think principal leadership styles play a role. Teachers really crave autonomy, they really crave feedback and support, they really crave the opportunity to collaborate with other teachers and come up with different ideas or how to best service their students.

I know for me personally, one of the things that I do to retain teachers is to invest in them, so we have several different partnerships at our school to allow teachers to get different experiences outside of just professional development from myself or members of my leadership team. We partner with organizations within our community.

We have one program called Restorative Practices
and Action, which allows teachers to network with all
different teachers across the city of Philadelphia. They
have these monthly meetings and they create little monthly
plans of different strategies to try in the classroom to
support more positive behavior and student empowerment. We
have another program called CTT, which stands for the
Center for Transformational Teacher training and that
allows for my leadership team members to provide real-time
coaching to teachers so they're right there in the moment
in the classroom. They have little headsets and they
provide coaching right then and there, which increases
their effectiveness exponentially. It's way better than, you
know, the typical observation feedback that you might get
once or twice a year.

The teachers love the real-time teacher coaching
and they love the feedback that they get from their
coaches. That program I think has been very beneficial in
maintaining and sustaining, especially my first-year
teachers. So those are the things, the commentary that I
have in terms of retention.

CHAIRMEN SONNEY: Mary Jo, would you like to
comment?

MS. WALSH: Yes. I would agree with Dr. Henne on
many of the points that she made. For me, the reason our
teachers are leaving, and again, my teachers that left had
been with me from the beginning, say 16 years ago. The thing that they miss the most is the ability to collaborate together. As many people have said, planning periods have been taken away, they're covering for each other, but the opportunity to collaborate and develop lessons. In our particular school, we collaborated and did lessons across grade levels.

So a kindergarten teacher and an eighth grade teacher might both be studying the holocaust or a particular, you know, part of the world, say Bali, and they had that opportunity to plan and collaborate and develop. That has gone away. And I agree with someone earlier this morning who talked about that we're feeling the effects post pandemic but that was there a little bit before the pandemic.

I think that the other piece, that for me, teachers are leaving for is it's not always the money, it's the opportunity for support, you know, with everybody in the building doing 15 other jobs, that day-to-day hey, do you have a moment that I just need to run this by you has evaporated. However, I would like to end on a positive note. I think that things that we have found, at least in our building, that in the past had worked to retain high quality teachers was that we were able to offer exceptional professional development. Our teachers benefited not only
from opportunities to develop skills in the classroom, but we also mentored teachers who could move on to be administrators, curriculum coordinators, and still stay within our process and contribute back in various other ways.

The other opportunity that we had, again to end on a positive note, was we do what we call two weeks of preservice before school even starts, so we have the opportunity to bring teachers back and we work together for two weeks and we take apart, what are the strategies to use in an effective ELA classroom, science classrooms, and those are the kinds of things that builds relationships among the staff, build faith in each other, build an opportunity to be there to support each other and those are the things that we're missing right now because we just don't have the time.

So I would say there's a lot of positivity out there. I think we just need to figure out how to harness it and share it across all of the districts. We don't need to reinvent the wheel.

CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Thank you. And again, thank you to all the testifiers today. It's very important information and I'm sure that we will see a number of bills coming forward from the members of this Committee. I also want to thank the members for sticking it out. It was a
rather long hearing, but again a very, very important one.

So thank you again. This hearing is adjourned.
CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that the foregoing proceedings are a true and accurate transcription produced from audio on the said proceedings and that this is a correct transcript of the same.

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