

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
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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

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(See submitted written testimony and handouts online.)

P R O C E E D I N G S

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

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

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

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

22 MINORITY CHAIRMAN LONGIETTI: Mark Longietti. I
23 represent the 7th Legislative District in Mercer County,
24 and I serve as the Minority Chairman of the House Education
25 Committee.

1 REPRESENTATIVE HILL-EVANS: Carol Hill-Evans. I
2 represent the 95th Legislative District in York County.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

23 REPRESENTATIVE SCHROEDER: Thank you.
24 Representative Meghan Schroeder from the 29th
25 District, also from Bucks County.

1 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Chairman Longietti and
2 I would also like to welcome our newest member who's
3 already introduced herself. Representative Gina Curry from
4 the 164th District is replacing Representative Gainey, who
5 we all know is now the Mayor of Pittsburgh. So welcome,
6 Representative.

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

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

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

22 While members of this Committee and the General
23 Assembly may not agree on every proposed solution, we can
24 all agree that schools must be adequately staffed with
25 qualified teachers and other school personnel to help

1 ensure student success. To receive a holistic view of this
2 issue, the Committee has invited various school
3 administrators, school personnel, and individuals working
4 in the field of teacher preparation, development, and
5 certification to testify with us here today.

6 Chairman Longietti.

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

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

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

23 But something is happening that's causing folks
24 to not enter the profession and causing others to leave the
25 profession prematurely, and I'm very interested to hear the

1 testimony today to hear from people that are on the ground
2 and understand this challenge and perhaps some solutions to
3 solving it because it is such an important issue for our
4 time. And we need to treat these folks as professionals.

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

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

12 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Thank you.

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

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

21 (Oath Administered.)

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

24 Dr. Garcia will begin when she's ready.

25 DR. GARCIA: Good morning, Chairman Sonney,

1 Chairman Longietti, and distinguished members of the House
2 Education Committee.

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

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

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

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

19 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Very good.

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

22 DR. WILLIAMS: Good morning. I'm Dr. Desha
23 Williams, Dean of the College of Education and Social Work,
24 and I thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak
25 about the shortage of teachers in the Commonwealth.

1 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: And Dr. John Ward.

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

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

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

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

20 We have been concerned about these issues for
21 quite some time. The past decade has seen enrollments in
22 postsecondary education drop to levels that are not
23 sustainable. And of course one of the biggest determinants
24 of who enters educator preparation programs are those who
25 enter postsecondary education to begin with.

1 And so one of the most promising trends in the
2 2018-'19, and '19-'20 school years was that we finally saw
3 an increase in the number of individuals declaring
4 education as their major in educator prep programs.

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

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

20 That assessment might not be reassuring to many
21 of us across the state and it shouldn't be reassuring.
22 Instead, we should seize upon this opportunity to really
23 dramatically change the way in which we prepare, attract,
24 and retain all educators. Because, as you mentioned at the
25 outset, now that we are singularly focused on the provision

1 of in-person instruction, we must not only prepare teachers
2 for what's ahead for all of our young people, we must also
3 increase the infrastructure of support that is available to
4 students in some districts but not others when it comes to
5 professional support staff and other individuals.

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

12 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Thank you.

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

15 DR. WILLIAMS: Good morning.

16 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Good morning. On your
17 side of it, are you getting much feedback on, number one,
18 why students aren't either electing or finishing once they
19 take the education route and/or once they've entered the
20 workforce, you know, have you been watching and seeing if
21 the numbers are declining on how many, you know, leave it
22 rather quickly after a year or two and decide that it was
23 not for them, which would kind of reflect back to how
24 prepared they were for what was -- what they were going to
25 experience, right?

1 And so if they're really not prepared for the
2 experience that they're going to have in that classroom,
3 it's obviously going to lead them to want to leave, and we
4 have to stem that from happening.

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

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

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

21 A lot of districts are working with higher ed
22 preparation programs to create pathways so that students
23 become more interested in being a teacher at a younger age,
24 like in high school, and looking at ways to create these
25 pathway programs such that we can retain their interest

1 through high school into the teacher preparation programs,
2 and I think that that will help that bottleneck of teachers
3 coming into the -- to increase the pipeline.

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

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

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

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

21 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Thank you.

22 Representative Topper has joined us today.

23 And Representative Gleim.

24 REPRESENTATIVE GLEIM: Hi. Thank you for being
25 here today. I have just two quick questions for Dr.

1 Garcia, if that's okay.

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

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

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

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

22 I'd like to ask Dr. Helm to expand on the Act 91
23 provisions. And Act 91 really served an immediate critical
24 need from an emergency stance perspective, and so that is
25 an important relief to the field and it also complements

1 other routes that are available to superintendents that
2 have actually existed since prior the pandemic and prior to
3 Act 91. So I'll ask him to expand on that.

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

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

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

23 REPRESENTATIVE GLEIM: Okay. Thank you for that.
24 When I, you know, was looking at other states I know that
25 the State of Maryland allows teachers to enter into the

1 workforce with an associate's degree, and that's apart from
2 substitutes. And so when I asked about that in my journey
3 I was shot down, saying no, in Pennsylvania you have to
4 have a bachelor's. So it does create a little bit of a
5 barrier there.

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

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

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

24 Of course, it's not the only factor here in, you
25 know, having professionals feel fulfilled in their jobs.

1 But because of the longstanding statute that has existed, I
2 don't know, since what year, maybe in the '80s or '90s, we
3 really need to take a new look at the way in which we
4 convey that the educator profession is an honorable one,
5 one that needs to be demonstrably valued in our society.
6 And there's no time like the present in order to make that
7 one of the signals that individuals receive and that
8 enhance our ability to recruit more into the profession.

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

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

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

24 DR. HELM: So just to clarify, you're asking for
25 data related to -- that was referred to earlier in

1 testimony; is that correct?

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

7 DR. HELM: Sure. Okay.

8 REPRESENTATIVE GLEIM: Yeah.

9 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Chairman Longietti.

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

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

22 But I want to ask two questions, if I could, to
23 the panel. And Dr. Garcia, you referenced in your
24 testimony that the certification process can be a
25 barrier -- a barrier for everybody but also a barrier for

1 minority teachers, which is something that we've seen a
2 precipitous drop in the Commonwealth.

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

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

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

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

1 profession?

2 So those two areas, the certification issue and
3 that.

4 Thank you.

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

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

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

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

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

1 alone.

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

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

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

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

25 So that's one thing that we can address

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

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

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

16 We're certifying probably around between 5- and
17 6,000 people, pretty much, in the last eight years. But
18 those numbers were obviously higher and because there were
19 more people coming out of programs.

20 And as far as the process, I've been concerned
21 about the process since I took over in 2019. And my
22 primary concerns are with the teacher information
23 management system, which is used to process applications.
24 It was introduced to the Department in 2011-'12, and that
25 system really needs to be looked at.

1 Fortunately, with Dr. Garcia's help, we recently
2 were able to put out an RFQ and we're now looking at having
3 someone come in and look at that system and evaluate that
4 system.

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

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

21 And fortunately, under Dr. Garcia's leadership,
22 we are, you know, getting more staff back to try to address
23 the reaching out to people who need assistance because it's
24 complex. The certification in Pennsylvania is complex and
25 helping people understand what they need to do and then

1 getting them through the teacher information management
2 system and getting them to that final point where they're
3 actually certified.

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

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

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

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

1 enrolled in postsecondary.

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

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

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

24 The Aspiring to Educate pilot that concluded and
25 worked with a variety of institutions of higher education

1 in the southeastern Pennsylvania region has a lot of
2 promising practices. You mentioned the Grow Your Own
3 programs. There's not a lot of evidence yet around Grow
4 Your Own programs. And so we're trying to build the
5 evidence around not just getting more individuals
6 interested in educator professions but also assessing and
7 evaluating how well, you know, we prepare them to become
8 teachers and school leaders.

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

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

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

23 Some of those standards, I think, are really
24 important to maintain like PDE has requirements for us to
25 have field experiences throughout our programs starting at

1 first year. That's pretty common across Pennsylvania. And
2 graduating kids getting more and more. Also in
3 Pennsylvania, you have to have a major in the content area
4 that you're teaching if you're a secondary ed person. And
5 licensure tests, of course. And the 3.0 test for GPA
6 requirement has been important. I've seen it personally
7 that it makes a real difference in the quality.

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

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

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

22 And the last thing I want to say about the basic
23 skills testing is it's kind of an arbitrary requirement
24 that there really is no evidence that it relates to good
25 teaching as some of those other things like GPA and content

1 area licensure and field experience all do relate to
2 quality teaching.

3 MINORITY CHAIRMAN LONGIETTI: Dr. Williams.

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

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

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

22 Because in some cases that's increasing the
23 number of credit hours needed to complete a program that's
24 not attached to what's needed for certification; it's basic
25 skills preparation courses that's required that a lot of

1 students don't need. Some students actually are able to
2 exempt the basic skills test but they still are required to
3 take those 12 hours in their program, which again is
4 increasing time to completion, increasing their credit
5 hours, and then, of course, then increasing that debt ratio
6 for their college experience.

7 Thank you.

8 MINORITY CHAIRMAN LONGIETTI: Very helpful.

9 Thank you.

10 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Representative Nelson.

11 REPRESENTATIVE NELSON: Thank you. I appreciate
12 it.

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

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

23 DR. GARCIA: Let me make sure I understand your
24 question, Representative Nelson. So are you referring to
25 the drop in postsecondary enrollment in the last decade and

1 how that impacts our ability to prepare future educators?

2 REPRESENTATIVE NELSON: Yes.

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

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

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

22 And those are trends that are playing out here,
23 as well, in Pennsylvania. And so when you combine whether
24 or not young people, regardless of race, ethnicity are
25 encouraged to go to college are given the supports they

1 need, which is really beyond tuition and fees and extends
2 to other costs of attendance that have really contributed
3 to the lack of college affordability and to the supports
4 that they receive as they're about to enter the profession,
5 we cannot, you know, address those issues without also
6 addressing how we have to make college more affordable and
7 we have to absolutely draw attention to the fact that many
8 more students today are coming from households where
9 neither parent went to college.

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

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

24 One of the other things though I think is
25 important is that when we talk about a teacher shortage,

1 we're not talking about bodies, per se. And thank you to
2 the Dean -- the last who spoke, because if you could and
3 what is not yet part of this testimony is the impact, well-
4 documented, of successive years of underprepared of
5 ineffective teaching on a student's achievement.

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

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

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

24 DR. GARCIA: Absolutely. Thank you so much for
25 that question.

1 So there's a lot of research that in the last
2 couple of years of the pandemic really emphasize the
3 critical role that continuous professional learning and
4 development plays in our ability to retain the individuals
5 who enter educator prep programs. And just, you know, in
6 general. You know, we've been in a grand experiment for
7 the past two years of what it means to lead in the times
8 that we find ourselves in.

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

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

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

25 And so I think that it's our responsibility and

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

10 And so thank you.

11 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Representative Topper.

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

24 These are people with life experience. These are
25 people that in some cases we might -- you know, if I hear

1 from all of my schools that I represent, all 10 of them,
2 they're having a hard time finding specific subjects
3 especially at the secondary level in terms of, whether it
4 be physics or chemistry, some specific subjects that
5 perhaps these people have expertise in. What would be
6 areas that we can make that transition easier?

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

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

22 Online models, we have provisional
23 certifications, emergency certifications where teachers
24 they can still get their full-time pay, be teacher of
25 record while going through our programs to complete their

1 teacher preparation and still -- you know, and attending to
2 some of those pipeline needs while completing their program
3 and earning a master's degree at the same time because they
4 already typically have a bachelor's degree, some even
5 higher. And so then, they come, they get their master's
6 degree in education as long -- as well as their
7 certification program while sometimes teaching and some
8 people actually can take the time off to do that.

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

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

1 REPRESENTATIVE TOPPER: Thank you. Thank you,
2 Mr. Chairman.

3 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Representative
4 Isaacson.

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

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

23 And the pipeline has to not just include new
24 teachers coming in, but you need seasoned, experienced
25 teachers to guide them along on the best practices. And

1 again with the college affordability and the lack of pay
2 that we give them here in Pennsylvania, how do you ask
3 somebody to take on that kind of debt when you're not even
4 paying them enough to pay for a mortgage and their debt
5 payment, much less start a family and keep roots here in
6 Pennsylvania? So I understand we need to address that.

7 And we certainly don't want to tell people that
8 we're going to dumb down the education requirements of
9 those that are going to bring our children along because we
10 are judged as a society on how we educate the society that
11 we have certainly make sure that the tenor of society is
12 more inclusive. And I wanted to go towards the education
13 workforce strategy with regard to the diversification.

14 You spoke about, what can we do to make sure that
15 we have an attractive package for the people who look like
16 the children that they're teaching? You remarked about the
17 Asian Community and the African-American Community
18 considering these are the -- and the Hispanic Community,
19 and these are the largest sectors that are growing here in
20 Pennsylvania. And we certainly want to have educators
21 there leading those children who look like them, but we
22 need to make it affordable. What are some strategies that
23 we can do? Is it marketing, or?

24 DR. GARCIA: Thank you so much for the question,
25 Representative Isaacson. So there are many strategies.

1 When Pennsylvania was developing its state ARP ESSER Plan,
2 we identified four ways in LEAs, Local Education Agencies,
3 could attract and incentivize new teachers and school
4 leaders into the profession. One way, as you alluded to in
5 your earlier remarks, is on developing mentoring programs
6 between veteran and new teachers. That's one way that LEAs
7 can use their ARP ESSER dollars. They can also use those
8 dollars to incentivize and provide, you know, essentially
9 what is common practice in the corporate world, which are,
10 you know, sign-on bonuses in order to, you know, attract
11 people into the profession.

12 The other two ways that LEAs can use ARP ESSER
13 dollars -- you know, because I'm beginning within the
14 federal investment because there was a historic investment.
15 That third round of stimulus funding is probably the
16 largest in the nation's history, and so it really enabled
17 our superintendents and their teams to dramatically change
18 the way in which they recruit and hire individuals. The
19 other two ways that ARP ESSER dollars could be used has to
20 do with, you know, creating grow-your-own programs and the
21 like. And so the school district of Philadelphia was the
22 school district that worked with the institutions of higher
23 education and the Aspiring to Educate program. And so they
24 have already some pretty good footing within which to
25 increase that diversification of the pipeline.

1 Personally, I know that I was educated in
2 Baltimore, Maryland and Miami, Florida. In first grade and
3 in the -- Ms. Randall (ph) was the first teacher of color
4 that I had. Mrs. Keys (ph) in Miami, Florida was of
5 Jamaican descent. And then Ms. Garcia (ph) and Mr. Jerado
6 (ph) taught me French and physics. I know I'm a direct
7 result of the impact that having teachers of color and
8 teachers who look like you in the classroom. And I'm
9 really, really hoping that that can be part of what we
10 focus on going forward in Pennsylvania because the
11 projections that the Western Interstate Commission for
12 Higher Education produces on who are high school graduates
13 are and who they will be by 2025, there is going to be an
14 overall decline in the size of the K-12 population, but
15 within that decline there will be an increase in students
16 of color and students of two or more races. And so we
17 really have less than three years left to prepare the
18 educator workforce for that future that is very quickly
19 upon us.

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

25 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Representative Cirese.

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

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

21 When I was a kid we didn't have that. And I
22 usually blame our generation because we didn't have that,
23 and I thought well, we have to teach a test and see if they
24 can pass. But should we be looking to change the whole
25 philosophy of what we do in public education? And then

1 when we look to support it financially, salary-wise is one
2 thing but also what our children have in the classrooms and
3 help our teachers teach. We talk about having a reserve in
4 Pennsylvania or a budget -- over, you know, \$7 billion that
5 we have in the budget this year. And when we put money in
6 education properly, would that also stimulate not only in
7 salary-wise but the classroom itself what we should be
8 doing to have people come into this field?

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

19 A lot of the work that the National Conference on
20 State Legislatures has been working on is really about
21 reframing assessments from a diagnostic point of view. And
22 that is one thing that many other countries have shifted to
23 in, in the way in which we assess where young learners are
24 in their educational journeys and which are going to be
25 much more helpful in the long run in addressing any of

1 those learning gaps that they experience along the way.
2 And so I would welcome continued dialogues around
3 assessments. And let me ask Dr. Helm if he has anything to
4 say on that topic? Because, you know, certification is
5 filled with assessments as well.

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

19 But the general question I think you're referring
20 to is, we're preparing the whole teacher. So right now
21 with Chapter 49, the competencies that folks are being
22 prepared is awareness, cultural awareness, all these things
23 that go into that to make sure that whatever the teacher
24 encounters when they get that first job and they're asked
25 to teach, they're -- you know, the rigor is there. And we

1 don't want to kind of divorce the rigor from the fact that
2 we also want to try to, you know, create situation where we
3 have more folks.

4 So it's not just about -- as was shared earlier,
5 about creating more bodies but more folks that are able to
6 fill these positions in these areas where there are
7 shortages. And so that's really where we're working with
8 49 and 354 eventually to address these issues to make sure
9 that we have teachers that come out that know their content
10 but also are able to deal with other issues that we're
11 encountering now in classrooms that we didn't see in the
12 last decade or longer.

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

1 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Representative Curry.

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

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

1 the actual districts in doing it.

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

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

1 have to finish in another way?

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

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

24 And please forgive me if I forget some of the
25 topics you raised. Part of what you mentioned about

1 trauma-informed approaches to instruction, that is not only
2 necessary for all future educators but also existing
3 educators, right, because we have a responsibility to learn
4 more about who our students are and what environments
5 they're coming to us from and to be able to identify what
6 are some of those traumas that might prevent them from
7 really advancing and -- in their educational pursuits.

8 And so part of the Chapter 49 regulations that
9 were approved last week are an effort to build cultural
10 awareness and trauma-informed approaches and practices, and
11 so we'll be working with our educator prep programs, many
12 of which are already engaged in these efforts to see what
13 we can do to increase that professional learning and
14 capacity that all current and future educators need. And
15 let me ask Dr. Helm for a moment to expand on that?
16 Because he was a part of the Chapter 49 conversations since
17 before I was -- I joined the department. And then I'll
18 come back and talk about equity, inclusion, and belonging
19 at the agency.

20 DR. HELM: I would just like to mention, to just
21 follow up with -- Dr. Garcia has given a really broad
22 answer, here -- is there are two things as I mentioned
23 before with Chapter 354. We're about to engage on some
24 serious discussions that will involve stakeholders about
25 educator preparation in this state. The second thing

1 that -- large project that we're also engaged in is the
2 Educator Workforce Strategy project, which was alluded to
3 earlier, and these are the types of discussions that we're
4 going to have regarding the educator workforce and
5 including all of those things that you mentioned because
6 that's where we need to be.

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

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

1 leaders and teachers are all involved more and more in
2 providing social and emotional learning and supports to
3 students.

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

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

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

24 DR. WILLIAMS: Yes. Thank you. I want to circle
25 back to Representative Curry's statement about the trauma

1 that some -- that many African-American and BIPOC students
2 find in their K-12 experiences. That's actually some of
3 the conversations that we are having with some of our
4 district partners of, why would I want to go back and teach
5 in a district that has disenfranchised me for the past 12
6 years? That's the million dollar question. And so looking
7 at that and really taking a deeper dive into the -- what's
8 the root cause of that and how can we address those? And I
9 think that's the real question that we need to address.

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

19 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: And Dr. Ward?

20 DR. WARD: I wanted to echo that and say that
21 Chapter 49 requires higher education to revise our
22 curriculum to help teachers become -- teaching ways that
23 are culturally sustaining, but we need help with it. We're
24 going to do it, but we could do it well, or we could do it,
25 you know, not quite as well. We need support. And so I

1 support the idea of a new office in PDE that has leadership
2 in that area. Higher education could use a little bit of
3 help from PDE on that -- in that regard.

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

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

22 And teacher educators are forward-looking people.
23 They think about the future. They're excited about the
24 future. So that's still true. And as long as we put in
25 some changes to support better preparation for diverse

1 students and recruiting more students into the pipeline, I
2 think the teacher shortage will gradually be addressed.

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

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

17 (Oath administered)

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

20 Dr. Hennie, you can begin.

21 Dr. Sanville.

22 DR. SANVILLE: Thank you. Chairman Sonney,
23 Chairman Longietti and the distinguished members of the
24 House Education Committee, my name's John Sanville. I'm
25 the superintendent of the Unionville-Chadds Ford School

1 District and also President Elect of the Pennsylvania
2 Association of School Administrators. I'm here today
3 representing PASA, whose members include school district
4 superintendents, assistant superintendents, executive
5 directors, and other public school leaders from across the
6 Commonwealth. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you
7 today and answer questions. And at this time, I know you
8 have my written remarks. I'll leave them stand and be
9 happy to answer questions as they come.

10 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Go ahead, Mr. Poeske.

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

23 So just in Bucks County alone, there were schools
24 this past year that had to close up because of teacher
25 shortages. Our school, we were on the verge of closing two

1 times throughout this year due to not having enough
2 teachers. Now, yes, that was due mainly to COVID and those
3 situations, but as you all know just not enough people in
4 the pipeline, teachers, substitutes, et cetera.

5 And I think you see in the testimony that I
6 wrote, really over the past 10 years, two-thirds reduction
7 in teacher certifications in this state, and that's huge,
8 from 21,000 down to 7,000 over the past 9, 10 years.

9 That's dramatic. And in speaking to superintendents and my
10 colleagues throughout the state, it's getting more and more
11 difficult, and in fact, in the career and technical world,
12 the CTE world, it's really becoming a crisis. I am very
13 concerned when our welding teachers or electrical teachers
14 retire and the candidates or lack thereof that we may be
15 able to get to fill those positions. It really is a
16 critical situation. What we do in our world is we train
17 and education those future workers, the people that we all
18 hire in our homes and in our companies and our businesses.

19 We're competing against those people to try to
20 recruit them back into the teaching world, yet they may be
21 making \$100,000, maybe 60,000 in a bad year. What do we
22 have to offer in most schools and districts, \$50,000, going
23 back to school, working towards not only your master's
24 degree but making sure you get your teacher certification
25 first? In addition, we ask teachers to pay for their

1 continuing education. Yes, we may pay them upwards to 50
2 percent. Some school districts and CTEs may pay more than
3 that, but I know one school district is paying \$50 a credit
4 up to three credits, \$150 for that teacher to get trained
5 furthering his or her education. That's a huge
6 discrepancy, huge discrepancy.

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

18 And by way of example in terms of tuition -- I
19 know I looked these up before I put that in my testimony,
20 but Penn State for a three-credit course undergraduate's
21 about \$2,400 if you include the fees, so that's that. And
22 regardless, we always talk about how teaching is a calling
23 and yes, it is a calling. I love the profession. I'm an
24 educator by profession. I came up through the ranks. And
25 as wonderful as that is, there's a huge discrepancy between

1 the salary commensurate with what is going on in the world
2 that I'm bringing people in. But also we're asking them to
3 put out money to do this job.

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

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

1 to start from ground zero.

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

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

19 And lastly, there's just some things that I think
20 we could look at -- we could look at. One is maybe just
21 reducing or easing some of the requirements that PDE has in
22 place for teachers. Other states have less -- I heard it
23 said before, other states have less stringent requirements,
24 and I know that's a fine line. We want quality teachers.
25 Of course I want quality people in front of our kids, you

1 know, but other states are doing some various things to
2 bring more teachers into the pipeline.

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

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

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

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

23 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Yes.

24 MS. TRUCHAN: You would think after teaching on
25 Zoom for all of this time that I would know to unmute

1 myself. Good morning, Chairman Sonney, Chairman Longietti,
2 and members of the House Education Committee. My name is
3 Vicki Truchan, and I'm an eighth grade English teacher at
4 North Hills Middle School in Alleghany County. I am
5 really, truly honored to be here today to speak on behalf
6 of the teachers in our state and on behalf of the
7 Pennsylvania State Education Association.

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

19 First, I want to begin by saying, we really
20 desperately need your support. Yes, we need your support
21 to enact policies that will help us rebuild and strengthen
22 the educator pipeline. But more importantly as our elected
23 leaders, we need your encouragement and public support
24 because frankly, too many of us have been feeling devalued
25 and disrespected for a long time. Even before the

1 pandemic, there's been negative public perception hanging
2 over the profession, and it's driving away very talented
3 individuals at what's an alarming rate. The lack of public
4 support for teachers, especially after what we can all call
5 the nightmare of COVID, it's palpable.

6 During the height of the pandemic, teachers were
7 unfairly portrayed as not working, when in fact, I know for
8 myself and for all of my colleagues, we are working harder
9 than ever to support our students and deliver quality
10 instruction in a way that we had never had to do so before.
11 Without a doubt, the pandemic presented the most difficult
12 time in teachers lives.

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

25 But unfortunately, I am not the only heartbroken

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

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

22 And it's no wonder fewer and fewer young people
23 are aspiring to be educators. Take a moment to consider
24 the cost of higher education and the debt burden that comes
25 with attaining a bachelor's degree, plus the cost

1 associated with the required practice exam, certification
2 fees, background checks, clearances, post-baccalaureate
3 credit, the cost of keeping our certificates valid and
4 current through professional development, on top of the
5 out-of-pocket expenses for classroom supplies totaling
6 thousands more over the entirety of our careers.

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

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

23 In closing, I want you all to know that receiving
24 the invitation to present here, it represents one of the
25 few times that I have felt valued and respected as a

1 professional educator because I know you're here and you're
2 listening to me. Thank you very much for this opportunity.
3 And I will do my best to answer any questions that you
4 might have.

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

10 MS. TRUCHAN: Pay for substitutes?

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

13 MS. TRUCHAN: Okay.

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

23 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: And do you think
24 you've crossed the tipping point, so to speak, on that
25 level of pay that it becomes more lucrative just to quit

1 teaching and just do the substitute world because in the
2 end you're going to make as much or more money without all
3 of the headaches, you know? And we're seeing this in other
4 professions. We're seeing it a lot in nursing today, in
5 traveling nurses, you know, because it eliminates all the
6 headaches and it's a lot more money, you know. Are we
7 having any fear of going into that type of a situation?

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

19 I came from Virginia and I had a doctorate from
20 the University of Virginia, and I came to Pennsylvania and
21 I wasn't eligible to be a superintendent here. Even though
22 I'm very proud of that degree, didn't qualify me to be --
23 to receive a letter of eligibility from the Commonwealth of
24 Pennsylvania. And as you've heard from others, that's a
25 pretty common occurrence. I think that we thank the

1 General Assembly for what you've done to provide us some
2 avenues to get substitute teachers that are maybe in the
3 pipeline and don't have the certifications yet. That is
4 certainly helpful, and I think we need to look at other
5 ways to open the door for others that may have alternative
6 pathways to teaching from a certification standpoint and
7 also can provide us an increased substitute teacher pool.

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

12 DR. SANVILLE: It's both. It's both, because you
13 might -- you might have a teacher that goes on leave,
14 maternity leave, or some type of leave that you have a
15 substitute teacher in that classroom, a day-to-day
16 substitute that covers three, four, five, six weeks at a
17 time. So you have that. You have the -- just the run of
18 the mill garden variety don't feel well, teacher doesn't
19 come in, you need a substitute, but the impact of the pool
20 I think is greater than just -- than just that, because
21 let's just think about, you know, you hear about shortages
22 across the board in education. It's across all job
23 categories. I can tell you that in -- across the
24 Commonwealth, in the 500 districts, you're seeing teachers
25 giving up their planning periods to cover -- to cover

1 classes, so they're working. They don't have time to plan.
2 Chairman Longietti, you talked about some of the Asian
3 models where it's called polishing the stone where you give
4 teachers time to plan. Our teachers are giving up their
5 planning in order to cover their colleagues classes. I can
6 tell you that you are seeing administrators across the
7 Commonwealth serving lunches, driving buses. I've done
8 both myself this year because -- and it's a situation that
9 is not sustainable. We can -- we can make it work for now.
10 We cannot make it work long-term, and so I think that
11 anything that we can do, any mandate relief, any ways to
12 open the door to allow us to get more people in the door
13 will be -- will really benefit all the school districts.

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

22 DR. SANVILLE: Well I'll just give you two
23 examples. So we have had an open business teacher position
24 and an open technology teacher position that we have posted
25 and reposted and reposted and so during that period of

1 time, months, literally months, we have had substitute
2 teachers in there, not certified in business, not certified
3 in technology and that -- that has not been a great
4 situation for the students in that class. I mean, there's
5 no -- there's no other way to say it. And I've had to tell
6 that to parents, to agree with them, this is not a great
7 situation and so we look at Representative Topper brought
8 up people who are in business who may have a skill set to
9 come in to teaching and I've hired folks that have been
10 willing to go through the process, that have come from
11 business. They're fantastic. And is there a way to give
12 people who have those life experiences a doorway to getting
13 into the classroom rather than the process that we have
14 now. And I think that as a Commonwealth, we just have to
15 realize right now that the rules, the game around us has
16 changed, and I think that we have to be open to changing
17 our -- the way we do business because the world around us
18 has changed, and so the competition for people, the -- the
19 way that we certify folks, the way that we attract people
20 into education, I think we really need to be purposeful,
21 because clearly what we're doing now is not working, but
22 we've got to do it differently.

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

25 DR. SANVILLE: One last thing is that people --

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

21 MR. SONNEY: Chairman Longietti.

22 MR. LONGIETTI: Thank you all. Two areas I want
23 to explore. One is a couple of you mentioned in your
24 written testimony about the need for mental health and
25 emotional support personnel and I had a question from one

1 of my colleagues a few days ago; is there anything in the
2 budget proposal that deals with that, and at least from
3 what I gleaned, I guess it cuts either way right. So on
4 the one end the budget proposal is a very significant
5 increase in basic education funding. I'll see where we
6 actually end up, but I didn't see anything specific there.
7 That gives the school districts flexibility on how to use
8 that money. They could use it for mental health or
9 emotional support potentially if they received a large
10 increase. So, you know, what do you think ought to be done
11 there? Should we have something specifically directed
12 towards that to require, you know, school districts to use
13 moneys in that way or should it be more flexible, and then
14 I guess, number 2, and at least Dr. Poeske has given us
15 some insight on this; if you were king or queen what would
16 you do? What are the one, two or three things that you
17 would change?

18 DR. POESKE: Certainly I think with the dollars,
19 flexibility is going to be more critical for us. You know,
20 Dr. Sanville's school district may need something different
21 than what we need. I will say we are using federal dollars
22 right now as our funds for mental health issues, but that's
23 a stop gap. I mean, that money is going to dry up and then
24 that will hit us locally. Okay, so flexibility I think
25 would be critical with those dollars versus earmarking them

1 specifically for one thing or another. And the second part
2 was --

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

6 MR. POESKE: Right. Right.

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

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

20 DR. SANVILLE: In 2020 there was a joint state
21 government commission on the mental health care workforce
22 shortage, and quite frankly I think the conversation is the
23 same and there are a number of recommendations in that
24 document -- I have it here -- that talks about how, and I
25 think that the answers that you see here in the joint state

1 commission are similar and can be applied to teacher
2 shortages. So, and I'll just give you some ideas and some
3 of which are right here is loan forgiveness programs, some
4 of which already exist by the way, and there could be maybe
5 an increase in funding for those line items that are
6 already in the Commonwealth's budget that you get load
7 forgiveness for an extended period, three, four, five years
8 working in a school district. If you want to look at, for
9 instance, a grow-your-own program and I appreciate that
10 there's a dirth of research relative to grow-your-own
11 programs, but I just have to think prima fascia that if you
12 have a child in your school district who is engaged and he
13 has good relationships with adults in the building and you
14 encourage him or her to go into education and then maybe
15 there's a scholarship program maybe set up similar to the
16 academies or ROTC that college can be augmented or paid for
17 in return for a period of time, three, four, five years of
18 work in the field, and then once you have somebody in and
19 they see that it, especially if you're growing your own and
20 they're coming back to the schools that they worked in to
21 make a difference. I think that, and again, you know,
22 suggestions like this are in the joint commission so those
23 are just a couple of ideas for you.

24 CHAIRMAN LONGIETTI: Just, you know, wanted to
25 engage our virtual Ms. Truchan if she's still available.

1 MS. TRUCHAN: I'm here.

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

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

20 CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Representative Topper.

21 MR. TOPPER: Thank you Mr. Chairman. I really am
22 intrigued by the idea of reciprocity for states in terms of
23 especially CTE so Dr. Poeske I think, you know, I'll
24 certainly be looking into that and I think that's a very
25 good idea. Is it, and maybe this is best for Dr. Sanville,

1 is it as easy to find -- and I know it's not easy to find
2 anybody necessarily at this point, but I think we need to
3 be looking also at specifics of where this teacher shortage
4 is hitting us, whether it be CTE, maybe if people we can
5 bring directly in the field. In other words, you know, it
6 seems to be that I represent 10 school districts, which is
7 a pretty large group. You know, when they have an opening
8 for a third grade elementary school teacher, then they have
9 enough applicants. Not as many as they used to, but they
10 still have enough to find candidates, but when they have a
11 high school science opening, they can't find anybody. So
12 do we need to be looking at specifics in terms of
13 recruitment for subjects or areas or is it truly the same
14 as, look it's as tough finding middle school phys ed
15 teacher as it is a physics teacher in high school?

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

25 REPRESENTATIVE TOPPER: Yeah I think that's

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

24 DR. SANVILLE: Well first of all, congratulations
25 to your father. He must be quite a man. Those things

1 don't happen by accident. I will tell you this that the
2 experience that a child has after school, whether it's on
3 the field or on stage or in the musical, in the band, and
4 they spend a lot of time at school after school rather than
5 during the day and so I think it's really important in
6 terms of training that we provide and the recruitment that
7 we take and do to recruit good people to be in front of our
8 kids after school as much as we do during the day. We have
9 at Unionville-Chadds Ford -- our goal is to have every
10 child involved in some type of activity after school,
11 because that engagement -- once you're engaged in the
12 community in some way like that, you have buy in and so how
13 do we promote our teaching force in our community that'll
14 come in to do that and to promote that in our kids and so,
15 I guess to your question, and I will say this, we do not
16 hire a coach to be a teacher, right. We hire teachers
17 first and we like our teachers to be involved with the kids
18 after school because that's, you know, as we all think
19 back, you bring your football days, you tend to remember
20 more that event on stage and being on a team than you do
21 sitting (indiscernible - simultaneous speech)

22 REPRESENTATIVE TOPPER: Sure, but I think that
23 all plays into what we're talking about with mental health
24 as well. You know, we took away those opportunities for a
25 year and a half and some of us fought extremely hard

1 against that, not because I have a special affinity for
2 football, although I do, but it's also the idea that a lot
3 of what we're dealing with in this mental health space was
4 predicted. You know, because we did not let these kids
5 experience what they needed to experience in addition to
6 just learning, you know, what they were learning in the
7 classroom, so I think the more we can make that commitment
8 including with our faculty and in our recruitment, I think
9 it's a good thing. Actually, you know, we have teachers
10 who I think could be encouraged if they were also going to
11 do more and help out whether it be with a reading club or
12 whether it be with, you know, music or whether it be with
13 any of their passions that they can also fulfill those
14 passions in teaching through helping these kids fulfill
15 theirs. I think that's an important component as well.

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

1 COVID from a mental health perspective; there are other
2 things that are there foundationally in our nation that's
3 causing a mental health crisis.

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

6 CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Representative Curry.

7 REPRESENTATIVE CURRY: Thank you Chairman. I
8 just want to say thank you for your testimony and I know
9 that in education there's all brothers and sisters and, you
10 know, superintendents have been teachers. Most times
11 they've worked up the rank and they can really see the
12 scope of what their entire district looks like, but I want
13 us to recognize today too that no one on that panel is
14 representing school districts like the school districts
15 that I represent either. Now you may have been in those
16 school districts before, but I know about Unionville, and
17 Unionville is a really nice place to live and they have
18 really nice schools. I want us to, you know, just think
19 for a moment about a term that I taught sociology for a
20 long time. It's a word that if you look it up in an Urban
21 dictionary it's called weathering and weathering is a term
22 that the teacher who spoke a few moments ago, she talked
23 about weathering as a teacher. And it's really important
24 for us to understand it is when you have had exposure to
25 the same atmosphere and it wears you down over time and so

1 I would encourage all of us to think about that. You know,
2 the various school districts that lie within the
3 Commonwealth, there are different issues and different
4 problems throughout all of them. The issue is teacher
5 shortage, but we do have to look at like Chairman Longietti
6 said, the flexibility and where we would put those dollars
7 is what you talked about. Absolutely, we need to have that
8 flexibility because there's different districts that have
9 different needs. And so when we think about these teachers
10 right now, I want us to walk away from here thinking about
11 weathering, thinking about not the fact that we have to
12 educate our children, but the fact that weathering is a
13 situation that needs funding. Weathering is a situation
14 that needs more funding, because when you're in certain
15 buildings, you're in certain communities where the needs
16 are so overwhelming you can't even think about teaching
17 that day because you are a social worker, you're a
18 counselor, you're mommy, you're daddy, you're all of that
19 all in one and you're putting out so many fires in a day
20 that the education becomes secondary, so yes, we have to
21 think about that in this teacher shortage space. Thank
22 you.

23 CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Yes. Go ahead doctor.

24 DR. SANVILLE: I'd just like to respond, and I
25 think that your remarks are fair, and I will say this, I

1 think in relation to COVID, COVID really exposed across the
2 Commonwealth the haves and the half notes. And in terms of
3 access to resources, however you want to define resources,
4 internet, one-to-one capability, the number of staff
5 members to address mental health needs of students and I
6 think that that is true. Unionville-Chadds Ford is in
7 Chester County and we are very fortunate. That is
8 absolutely true. But I'm here to represent school
9 districts that are not so fortunate, that don't have
10 internet, the principals and superintendents have to drive
11 from their home to school just to get emails over safe-to-
12 safe tips because they don't have access to it any other
13 way over the weekends, so we are all in different
14 situations, but the disparity between the have and the have
15 notes was certainly exposed over COVID.

16 CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Representative Gillen.

17 REPRESENTATIVE GILLEN: I'm over here in the
18 cheap seats. Dr. Poeske, I'll direct this question to you.
19 Bucks County Technical School, I graduated from Pennsbury
20 High School, same neighborhood. I was reflecting just for
21 a few moments here because my dad taught adult education at
22 the Bucks County Technical High School. I think it had a
23 slightly different name in those days more than 45 years
24 ago. He had not finished the 10th grade. There was a war
25 that needed to fought back in the '40's, but he had the

1 (indiscernible), and I appreciate the fact that you still
2 value it today and that is experience. And he was a highly
3 technical person. I took the opportunity a few moments ago
4 to go to your website and I saw there were some openings,
5 instructional facilitator, for example and a building
6 substitute and the instructional facilitator requires two
7 years AA, you know, commence or experience and if this is
8 current, the salary was 15.50 an hour and the building
9 substitute was \$150 a day. I have five daughters and
10 they're out in the workforce at various levels mostly on a
11 part-time basis, but if I look at what retailers are
12 paying, Dunkin Donuts, etcetera, are you able to recruit
13 the talent that you're looking for at that salary?

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

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

25 DR. POESKE: Well, I think it's going to depend

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

1 of-state tuition. So if it can be done locally, let's look
2 more broadly from a state perspective on assistance there.

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

18 CHAIRMAN SONNEY: No.

19 REPRESENTATIVE GILLEN: Thank you Mr. Chairman.
20 I appreciate it.

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

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you everybody.

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

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

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

10 (Oath administered.)

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

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

22 I am currently a principal at Memphis Street
23 Academy, which is a charter school serving roughly 600
24 scholars in grades 5 through 8; 86 percent of these
25 scholars qualify for free or reduced lunch. I am also a

1 member of the Pennsylvania Educator Diversity Consortium,
2 an organization designed to increase the number of diverse
3 educators in Pennsylvania schools. In my role as a school
4 administrator, I have seen firsthand the impact that
5 teacher shortages can have on the student experience.

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

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

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

21 MS. WALSH: I do. Thank you very much. Good
22 morning Chairman Sonny, Chairman Longietti, members of the
23 House of Education Committee. I am Mary Jo Walsh and I
24 have the privilege of being the principal at the Fell Chart
25 School, which is a kindergarten through eighth grade

1 elementary school located in Simpson, Pennsylvania. We are
2 an amazingly successful small and diverse school located in
3 northeastern Pennsylvania that primarily serves financially
4 struggling families who want a great education for their
5 children. Most of our parents have a minimum of a high
6 school diploma and they want more skills and opportunities
7 for their children.

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

20 Over the last two years, we have struggled as
21 many of my counterparts have to secure and retain quality
22 teachers, substitute teachers and staff willing to meet the
23 needs of our students in our building. For me this task
24 has been humbling, exhausting, and sadly out of my control
25 no matter what I do or no matter what I have done. It has

1 been humbling for me to sit with teachers who have
2 dedicated years of service to our school or the teacher
3 profession in general. I've watched them struggle with the
4 decision to leave our students, to leave teaching, and to
5 walk away from a passionate mission of teaching due to the
6 ravages of the pandemic. They had fears of being in a
7 school and becoming ill, fears of leaving their loved ones
8 alone or bringing the disease home to them, and fears of
9 just the day-to-day stress of the pandemic hanging over
10 their heads.

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

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

1 parents.

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

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

21 It is painful to keep asking teachers and staff
22 to do more, but we have no choice. We are compromising in
23 areas of high needs, most especially in the need of mental
24 health for students and their families as well as academic
25 tutoring and small group mental health groups because our

1 choices are limited. Not only are we compromising, but we
2 no room for error anymore.

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

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

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

25 As I noted earlier, this is all sadly out of my

1 control as an administrator and I don't mean that in a
2 Machiavellian way; I mean that there are no people willing
3 to come to be interviewed that I can even offer them more
4 money to or offer a better schedule to. There's no one to
5 make an offer to. Our school, like many others, has been
6 recruiting, advertising, and working with agencies all to
7 staff our buildings and success has been elusive. We're
8 losing teachers to other industries and professions and why
9 wouldn't any other profession or industry want to hire a
10 teacher.

11 Teachers are dedicated, compassionate, and detail
12 oriented. They are a perfect candidate to hire. It is
13 time that we start looking at other professions and
14 industries to recruit those highly skilled people to teach
15 our children now. We need to make pathways to help schools
16 succeed, thrive, and survive. We need people in the field
17 to want to teach working with our students. We need to tap
18 into their knowledge base to make sure that they're trades,
19 skills, and entrepreneurial spirit gets passed on to our
20 next generation of learners. We need to remove barriers to
21 hiring. We need to partner with industries to create
22 pathways for our students to enter the job market, but also
23 for their professionals to enter the teaching profession.
24 We need reciprocal agreements now that may mean that we
25 have to change that we run our schools.

1 I'm all for making sure that we have strong
2 teacher preparation programs, but it is high time that we
3 be into exploring new options for recruiting. We need
4 something in place now. We can't wait another year or two
5 or our schools will be closed. We are currently in
6 survival mode and the mode below that is failure. We
7 cannot afford to fail our students. We cannot wait years
8 to solve this problem. We need this problem solved now or
9 there won't be a tomorrow of quality education for our
10 students.

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

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

25 CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Representative Nelson.

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

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

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

16 REPRESENTATIVE NELSON: Thank you. I think one
17 of the points that is important that we talk about here, is
18 again the importance of having quality educators, but so
19 much of the testimony, even from both of the building
20 leaders that we have in this session, have also focused on
21 the work that we are expecting those educators to do, and
22 there's kind of chicken or the egg component that says,
23 well if the work were reasonable, if what we were asking
24 our educators to do was simply reading, writing, and
25 arithmetic, would that pool perhaps be a little bit easier

1 to solve, would retention issues not be as great, would the
2 turnover that our educators are seeing not be quite as
3 significant; that's my theory and so before taking my
4 theory into legislation, I'm hoping that you all would be
5 able to continue to expound on that if -- you mentioned
6 that you have two and seven vacancies.

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

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

20 DR. HILL-HENNE: So my seven vacancies are the
21 vacancies that we have, they are teaching vacancies and
22 several of those vacancies are being filled by building
23 subs who are not certified individuals, and to speak to
24 your earlier question about if we were just asking them to
25 do reading, writing, and arithmetic, would they retained,

1 and I think, as many people have mentioned earlier, I know
2 especially from my school, one of the things that leads to
3 the lack of retention is the lack of understanding of the
4 scholars or the students that they serve. As I mentioned
5 before, we are a very high poverty school and you have to
6 be able to connect and relate to the kids before you can
7 actually teach them the concepts, so they can have the
8 greatest teacher preparation program in the world in terms
9 of their content, but if that preparation program did not
10 allow for them to have trauma informed instruction or
11 (indiscernible)then it just tends to still lead to
12 retention.

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

21 So our school systems seem to be inadequately
22 funded and because of that, we don't have most of the
23 professionals which makes those that we do have stretch
24 excessively thin to the point where we're saying, okay well
25 how do we get more bodies. But, the problem is that we're

1 starving a system and when that starts to deteriorate,
2 throwing more bodies into a classroom that don't have the
3 supports, the training, and the surrounding supports around
4 that is woefully inadequate. So some have argued that
5 perhaps we're building school systems with the wrong
6 objectives.

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

20 Thank you.

21 DR. HILL-HENNE: Thank you.

22 MS. WALSH: Thank you.

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

25 REPRESENTATIVE CURRY: So I'd be remiss if I didn't

1 talk to you doctor, because when we look at the charter
2 school system and how -- I had two openings. One opening
3 in my office and two young people who applied for it who
4 were teaching at charter schools in Philadelphia. It broke
5 my heart that they were coming to apply for a constituent
6 services position, but you know what it was, it wasn't that
7 they were teachers from the start, they left their
8 colleges, not in education, they couldn't find jobs and the
9 charter schools hired them.

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

17 CHAIRMAN SONNEY: I would say one of the
18 overarching themes today have been centered around pathways
19 and retention and so as we wrap this up, I'd like to ask
20 our final two presenters here today if you could speak a
21 little bit on the retention side. You know, we've heard a
22 lot about, you know, ways that we can incentivize them to
23 stay in by creating programs to help with their student
24 loans, but you know, what are the other issues that you
25 hear that are causing teachers to leave the profession?

1 DR. HILL-HENNE: Teachers leave the profession
2 for a number of reasons. I think one of them is definitely
3 working conditions. Sometimes they have to buy their own
4 paper to make photocopies for their students for the work
5 that they need. Sometimes they have to deal with parents
6 that may not be the same type of parents that raised them
7 and they don't understand like the differences in the
8 parenting styles. Sometimes they're dealing with
9 attendance issues or issues of apathy within the student
10 that they just haven't found the solutions to, and I would
11 put all of those things under working conditions.

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

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

25 We have one program called Restorative Practices

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

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

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

23 MS. WALSH: Yes. I would agree with Dr. Henne on
24 many of the points that she made. For me, the reason our
25 teachers are leaving, and again, my teachers that left had

1 been with me from the beginning, say 16 years ago. The
2 thing that they miss the most is the ability to collaborate
3 together. As many people have said, planning periods have
4 been taken away, they're covering for each other, but the
5 opportunity to collaborate and develop lessons. In our
6 particular school, we collaborated and did lessons across
7 grade levels.

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

16 I think that the other piece, that for me,
17 teachers are leaving for is it's not always the money, it's
18 the opportunity for support, you know, with everybody in
19 the building doing 15 other jobs, that day-to-day hey, do
20 you have a moment that I just need to run this by you has
21 evaporated. However, I would like to end on a positive
22 note. I think that things that we have found, at least in
23 our building, that in the past had worked to retain high
24 quality teachers was that we were able to offer exceptional
25 professional development. Our teachers benefited not only

1 from opportunities to develop skills in the classroom, but
2 we also mentored teachers who could move on to be
3 administrators, curriculum coordinators, and still stay
4 within our process and contribute back in various other
5 ways.

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

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

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

1 rather long hearing, but again a very, very important one.

2 So thank you again. This hearing is adjourned.

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