



**Pennsylvania House of Representatives
Education Committee
Public hearing on teacher shortage within the Commonwealth.
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Written Testimony submitted by Teach PA**

Across the nation, states are grappling with a teacher-shortage crisis that has been exacerbated by the pandemic. A number of factors have resulted in today's reality where the U.S. Department of Education-recognized 21 Teacher Shortage subject areas in Pennsylvania, including mathematics, computer science, and life sciences. The conversation to date has primarily addressed school districts and public schools, but we urge policymakers to consider the entire educational system as we search for innovative solutions to this problem.

Nonpublic schools, too, have witnessed teachers leaving the classroom setting because of pandemic needs, often opting for employment with educational vendors where they can craft their own hours. The skills that teachers possess - organizational skills, public-speaking, interpersonal skills and adaptability - are increasingly sought-after by employers outside of the education field altogether, where employers are facing a worker shortage of their own. Our schools feel this particularly acutely in the STEM subjects, where teachers are especially undercompensated relative to non-education sector employees. According to a 2018 survey by the Economic Policy Institute, "Pennsylvania public school teachers are undercompensated relative to other full-time workers with similar education and skills," receiving weekly average wages that are "12.1 percent lower than the wages of comparable full-time employees in Pennsylvania."

Therefore, identifying ways to bolster teacher satisfaction and wages is an indispensable avenue to addressing the teacher shortage, increasing teacher retention and encouraging new graduates to join the profession.

A program now exists in the State of New Jersey that does just this. It creates an avenue to augment standard teacher compensation by paying public school teachers to teach additional courses at local nonpublic schools, after their regular school hours. The program is targeted to STEM subjects, and instead of finding additional jobs or "gigs" to earn more after the school day which may end around 3PM, STEM certified teachers can teach an additional course in their own area of expertise - all while remaining full school district employees. Under this innovative public-private partnership, the state provides grants to school districts, to cover the full cost of additional STEM instruction hours. New Jersey's program not only addresses the nonpublic

schoolteacher shortage by bringing talented, highly qualified teachers into their schools, but also offering a way to increase compensation and job satisfaction for public school teachers.

Programs like this New Jersey Public-Private STEM Teacher program should be among the innovative solutions to resolving the Pennsylvania teacher shortage.

Teach PA will be happy to discuss this program and other innovative proposals further.

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Teach PA – A project of the Orthodox Union

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