



**Testimony of the
Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA)**

**Public Hearing Regarding
Teacher Certification/ Teacher Pipeline Initiatives**

**Presented to the
House Education Committee**

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By

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Good morning, Chairman Schweyer, Chairman Topper, and members of the House Education Committee. My name is Dr. Carla Claycomb and I am the Manager of Education Services for the PA State Education Association (PSEA). On behalf of PSEA, thank you for inviting us to participate in today's hearing on the critically important topic of restoring the teacher pipeline.

Having worked with PSEA members for over twenty years, I can attest that our union truly is a member-driven organization. Our organizational goals are shaped by our 178,000 members representing all sectors of the education profession and hailing from every region of the Commonwealth. Our policy, practical, and advocacy priorities directly reflect the issues members are most passionate about. While there have been some shifts in priorities over the years, one consistently remains at the top - *our members' commitment to ensuring all students have access to equitable opportunities to succeed academically, civically, and socially.*

Without question, this fundamental priority can only be achieved when Pennsylvania has a robust, stable, skilled, and diverse educator workforce. All students deserve access to a broad array of qualified educators who can address their expanding and increasingly complex academic and social-emotional needs. However, the current statistics paint a bleak picture. Pennsylvania's educator workforce is among the least diverse in the nation. In the last 12 years, there has been an alarming decrease in the issuance of Instructional I certificates to in-state graduates. The issuance of emergency permits has risen exponentially during that same period.

There is no single root cause for this crisis, nor is there a single solution for reversing it. Rebuilding the teacher pipeline requires sustained, multi-year, multi-faceted solutions. PSEA is grateful to you and your colleagues for embracing this approach as evidenced by the enactment of Act 55 and Act 33 in 2022 and 2023, respectively. These policies, when fully funded and implemented, will be foundational to the long-term growth of the education profession.

PSEA was deeply engaged in the development of the language ultimately enacted in both Act 55 and Act 33, and we are committed to their implementation. We are active participants on the Committee on Educator Talent Recruitment, helping in the development of the Program of Study for Education, and strongly advocate for increased investments in the pipeline including student

teacher stipends and the \$10 million proposed for FY24/25 by Governor Shapiro for the Talent Recruitment Account established by Act 55.

But PSEA is not only relying on state policy and funding to build the teacher pipeline. We continue to expand our own organizational commitment and strategic investments in programs that support recruiting, retaining, and sustaining an expanded universe of educators – particularly one that is more diverse and ideally connected to the community of the school in which they will teach. This includes engaging aspiring educators at the college level through our Student PSEA chapters as well as providing tailored support to our members for every phase of their career – from the early years teaching in the classroom all the way through retirement. And now we proudly have added Educators Rising to this portfolio with a focus on building high school pathways for the education profession.

PSEA and Educators Rising Pennsylvania

In March 2023, PSEA signed a Memorandum of Agreement to serve as the State Coordinator for Educators Rising Pennsylvania. Educators Rising - a national membership organization for rising educators and their teacher mentors – was launched in 2015 as a program of Phi Delta Kappa International (PDK) as the transformed and rebranded Future Educators Association and Future Teachers of America.

This Grow Your Own (GYO) programming is focused on supporting secondary schools in creating and implementing high-quality, pre-collegiate teacher pipeline programs that allow students to begin career training and credentialing while still in high school. The goal is cultivating a new generation of future teachers who reflect the demographics of their communities and who are passionate about serving those communities through public education.

In our role as statewide coordinator, PSEA is responsible for convening and supporting Educators Rising teacher leaders, hosting the annual Pennsylvania Educators Rising conference, and increasing awareness among secondary schools and education preparation providers of the value of the program for students and communities across the state.

PSEA already has devoted significant resources to meeting these responsibilities including: staffing support provided through the energetic leadership of PSEA's Director of Profession and Pipeline, Dr. Christopher Clayton; developing shared programming for networking and relationship-building between Educators Rising participants, Student PSEA, and PSEA Early Career members; regular state-level convenings of teacher leaders; planning and executing the successful, first-annual Educators Rising Pennsylvania conference held last month at Millersville University; presentations at numerous conferences across the state; exploring opportunities with education program providers to offer college credit to Educators Rising program completers; and ongoing engagement with LEAs to help them identify best options for starting their own chapters.

In addition to these investments, PSEA also secured a three-year grant in February totaling \$750,000 from the National Education Association's Great Public Schools Fund. The grant will be used to bolster our organizational efforts in growing the high school pipeline with an emphasis on racial diversity and building connectors through college and into the early years of their career.

PSEA strongly believes that working in collaboration with our members, school communities, the PA Department of Education (PDE) and other statewide stakeholders, Educators Rising has the potential to greatly increase the number and diversity of high school students entering teacher preparation programs in the Commonwealth for years to come.

Recognizing Educators Rising as a Career and Technical Student Organization (CTSO in Pennsylvania - ideally in time for schools to appropriately plan programming for SY24/25 - is one such area for collaboration. According to the US Department of Education, there is no authorized Federal entity that determines CTE/CTSO status and that, in the absence of such, it is up to each State to make those determinations.

While CTSO status is not required for schools to establish chapters, it is helpful for maximizing funding resources, improved alignment with other career and technical instructional programming, and as a mechanism for growing interest in the program. Educators Rising can

serve as CTSO in Pennsylvania – the only one solely dedicated to cultivating a new generation of educators who reflect the demographics of their communities and who are passionate about serving their community through teaching. Nationally, 51 percent of Educators Rising members are students of color.

Several of our surrounding states that compete with us for educator talent have already taken this important step. We look forward to continuing to work with PDE to add Pennsylvania to this list.

Educators Rising: Program Options

The Educators Rising program is designed to be flexible. Local Educators Rising chapters can be established in a variety of school settings. Program offerings can be tailored to meet the needs and capacity of the school and can range from hosting an extracurricular club, providing elective coursework, implementing the Education and Training program of study, or a combination of all the above.

Programs may look different in different schools, but quality is ensured when activities, resources, and student experiences are linked to Education Rising standards. The Educators Rising standards - rooted in the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) and developed by expert educators - define what high school students exploring teaching need to know and be able to do to take their first steps on the path to accomplished teaching.

Schools contract directly with PDK/Educators Rising for the program package. Packages vary depending on different factors such as the number of school sites utilizing the curriculum, the number of students in the chapter, levels of access by teachers and administrators, and the length of the contract which can be anywhere from one to five years.

Educators Rising provides chapters with varying levels of support and materials – again, tailored to the needs and capacity of the school. Educators Rising includes a 2-year sequenced curriculum introducing students to the professional skillsets and dispositions students need to be effective educators in the classroom. Content includes a Curriculum Map, Curriculum Framework, Guided Notes, and Project-Based Learning. There are more than 60 lesson topics with lesson plans of

varying lengths, allowing teacher leaders to modify to fit their needs and the needs of their students. PDK/Educators Rising provides schools with technical assistance, program evaluation tools, and training opportunities for teacher leaders.

In addition, rising educators can earn “industry credentials” by demonstrating competency in five essential building blocks for skilled educators – instructional implementation and supports; building positive classroom culture; collaboration with colleagues; knowledgeable use of formative assessments to inform instruction; and strategies for student engagement in their own learning. Students complete 5-15 hours of work and submit a digital portfolio to be reviewed by expert educators. This process helps ensure that achieving the Educators Rising micro-credential “badge” represents a meaningful early step on a rising educator’s path to accomplished teaching. Nationally, PDK/Educators Rising continues to work with institutions of higher education, scholarship committees, employers, and other evaluators to recognize and value these micro-credential achievements.

Respecting Current Teachers: *essential for the pipeline*

PSEA recently held two successful events – one for our Student PSEA chapters at the collegiate level and our first-ever Educators Rising Pennsylvania conference for high school students. The recurring theme from both our rising and aspiring educators about why they are exploring or pursuing teaching is that they were encouraged and inspired to do so by their favorite teacher.

The best tool Pennsylvania has for effectively recruiting future educators is ensuring the students in today’s classrooms have energetic, passionate teachers that inspire them to want to do the same for the next generation.

But even our very best and most engaged teachers face the very real challenge of burnout as a direct result of working in unpredictable, high-stakes conditions. For the past decade - and even more so during and after the pandemic – educators have continued to feel overwhelmed, understaffed, under-resourced, underpaid, and undervalued for their expertise and knowledge. These culminating factors directly impact the calculus of teachers who, despite their love for teaching and dedication to their students, now make the extremely difficult choice to leave the

profession much earlier than planned. Not surprisingly – these factors also impact whether today’s students will even consider going into the profession of teaching.

Building a viable, diverse, and sustainable teacher pipeline in Pennsylvania can only occur if future educators see and believe their efforts will be valued, respected, and compensated. We therefore urge you to carefully evaluate all future policies and investments through this lens and to use that insight to determine the necessary actions to be taken.