

February 16, 2022



Dear Senate Education Finance and Policy Committee Members,

MSBA appreciates your efforts to address the substitute teacher deficit in the state by authoring SF 2861. We believe this is a step in the right direction; however, we believe it doesn't go far enough to address the issue. MSBA sincerely believes each school district should have the authority to hire short-call substitute teachers and *then* notify the Professional Educators Licensing Standards Board (PELSB) of the hire.

Minnesota is facing a substitute teacher shortage, as is much of the rest of the United States. This shortage began years before the pandemic; however, the pandemic has brought to this staffing issue to the forefront because of quarantining requirements and other health and safety protocols.

COVID-19 has certainly exacerbated the issue; but the reality is that there are not enough subs to staff our classrooms. Administration scrambles when this is the case: teachers lose their prep to cover classrooms, classrooms are split up and moved to other classrooms causing yet another disruption to student learning. Not to mention increasing costs, both financial and time. As we look at the history of the problem, as well as out into the future, it is highly likely the situation will not self-correct.

Staffing a school with teachers is a minimum expectation in an educational system. This shortage has created instability in delivering a high-quality education for all students. Some states have had to close schools or shifted students into a larger classroom because of shortages. To help resolve this crisis and avoid these unfortunate measures, the resolution included below suggests some short-term and long-term solutions presented by several school districts.

To address the short-term solutions, there are paras, coaches, parent volunteers and other members of the community who do not have the four-year degree required but are familiar with the school's students and staff as well as its values and routines. The local school district can find the best candidates and providing the necessary training and evaluation to be an effective short-term substitute teacher. In addressing the long-term solutions, the State needs to fully fund the operating and staffing costs of the schools.

MSBA recently passed a resolution 107-6 at its Delegate Assembly:

MSBA URGES THE LEGISLATURE TO SUPPORT POLICIES THAT WILL ADDRESS THE SHORTAGE OF REGULARLY LICENSED, SHORT-CALL SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS BY REDUCING BARRIERS TO LICENSING AND HIRING PRACTICES AS WELL AS

INCREASING RETENTION STRATEGIES, SUCH AS:

- **ALLOWING NON-LICENSED INDIVIDUAL WITH A BACHELOR'S DEGREE TO APPLY AND BE HIRED BY A DISTRICT, WITH NOTIFICATION TO PELSB, FOR A SHORT-CALL SUBSTITUTE LICENSE;**
- **ALLOWING LOCAL DISTRICTS TO HIRE CANDIDATES WITH AN ASSOCIATE ARTS (AA) DEGREE AND NOTIFICATION TO PELSB, FOR A SHORT-CALL SUBSTITUTE LICENSE;**

- **ALLOWING LOCAL DISTRICTS TO HIRE A COLLEGE STUDENT WHO IS ACCEPTED AND ENROLLED IN A TEACHER PREP PROGRAM FOR AT LEAST TWO YEARS, WITH NOTIFICATION TO PELS, FOR A SHORT-CALL SUBSTITUTE;**
- **SUPPORTING LOCALLY DEVELOPED, RESEARCH BASED, PROGRAMS TO RECRUIT, TRAIN, AND DEVELOP SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS; OR**
- **INCREASING EDUCATION FUNDING TO PROVIDE COMPETITIVE COMPENSATION PACKAGES.**
- **CANDIDATES MUST COMPLETE ALL DISTRICT APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS, FEES AND BACKGROUND CHECKS PRIOR BEGINING WORK AS A SUBSTITUTE TEACHER.**

We ask you to please pass this bill today to provide the immediate relief needed in our schools. We remain committed to working with you as the bill moves forward.

Respectfully,

Minnesota School Boards Association