

March 2, 2023

Dear Chair Cwodzinski and Members of the Senate Education Policy Committee:

My name is Paul Peltier. I am a band and choir teacher in Fosston, Minnesota. I am also a board member on the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board. My classroom is 265 miles from your hearing room today. I am writing to urge you to pass SF 1477 and ensure we have qualified educators in Minnesota schools. It's hard to recruit and retain educators in Greater Minnesota. It gets harder when they're not trained with the skills they need to make it in the classroom for the long haul. Many are being left to fail. SF 1477 allows us to fix that.

I'm a Minnesotan but I started out teaching in North Dakota through a non-traditional path. There, I had to rise to the occasion and show evidence of teacher preparation in order to continue to teach. This training and mentoring allowed me to gain the missing skills I needed to be effective in the classroom. I urge Minnesota to do the same.

I have seen unprepared teachers who are good with kids, but short on skills. They're not getting the help and training they need to effectively serve students in the classroom. The state's pedagogical standards - the Standards of Effective Practice - are just that. Standards. They're there for a reason. Because they are tied to outcomes.

I have seen some special education colleagues struggle. They struggle with paperwork and knowing how to teach. What ends up happening is that veteran staff have to pick up the work-load. This increases staffing stress and leads to more burnout. If they don't last, a new person is hired and the veteran staff have to begin what feels like a never-ending cycle of retraining another new person.

To expect administrators to fill the preparation gap is unrealistic and unfair, especially when many of them are not trained in teacher prep. Some of them even have to take on extra duties like subbing on bus routes. How much more can we expect from them?

As a member of the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board, and currently one of only two active public school classroom teachers serving today, I am keenly aware of what happens when underprepared colleagues join my school staff team. The challenge is significant in Greater Minnesota, where I teach. But guess what, teaching is a professional job. It's about time we trust teachers to say what we need. Let us lead on teacher things. And what we have said is that we need colleagues who are trained to do the job. Please pass SF 1477.

Sincerely,
Paul Peltier