

Caitlynn Richardson - HB1009 Testimony
Indiana House Education Committee
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Hello - thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of HB1009 this morning. My name is Caitlynn Richardson. I am a third-year middle school teacher in the Indianapolis area and a Teach Plus Indiana Teaching Policy Fellow.

I graduated from Indiana University with two degrees - neither of which is in teaching. I received two Bachelor degrees in Biology and Political Science with the idea of becoming a lawyer or a doctor, the careers my family, friends, and even teachers pushed me towards because I was seen as so successful. Luckily, I found my way to teaching through a year-long MAT program at the University of Indianapolis where I had the opportunity to student teach for an entire school year. This was unbelievably helpful because when it comes to learning, it's necessary to set up classroom expectations from the get-go.

As a new teacher, you might have a basic idea of what the first day of school can look like but it's not the reality. Traditional programs offer wonderful classes that teach the research and theory behind management strategies, but the greatest teacher is experience. In addition to being able to observe my mentor teacher in a variety of scenarios like the first day of school or what it's like during state testing, I also left my year-long program with an entire year's worth of lesson plans. For example, I had a problem-based learning unit combining sports statistics and Newton's Laws already planned out and was able to successfully and effectively integrate STEM into my classroom as a first year teacher.

These lesson plans were absolutely vital in surviving my first year of teaching. I had other first year teachers asking me for materials. I had other first year teachers asking me for help with how to create seating charts or use the copy machines or how to change grades in our online grading system. I walked into my first official year of teaching with an entire year of teaching already under my belt. My first year I was rated effective, and since then I have been highly effective and have felt confident enough in my teaching to benefit my students in other ways like coaching volleyball, running Elite Gaming Live and Girls Who Code, and helping to get my school STEM-certified.

At a time when Indiana is struggling to recruit and retain teachers, teacher preparation can play a huge factor in changing the tides. The Learning Policy Institute found that Indiana was one of the worst in the country when it came to retention - citing an 82% retention rate in 2016. The institute also found that one large reason that teachers were leaving was that they felt unprepared and ineffective in the classroom. HB1009 has the opportunity to help incoming teachers feel more prepared. Elevating the standards of our teacher preparation programs will not only help teachers start their challenging careers off on a positive note, but it will also help change public opinion on teachers.

What's the first thing you think of when you hear "residency"? I know I think of medical school. My sister-in-law, Kelley, spent long hours during her multi-year residency as she practiced her craft to become the best doctor she could be. Now she is able to use that experience she gained to be successful in her practice. I think preparing our teachers in a similar manner is a great way to not only retain our teachers, but to also elevate the teaching profession in Indiana. Other future teachers need these same opportunities I was able to experience, and this is why I support HB1009. Thank you.