

Kristien Hamilton- HB1003 Testimony  
Indiana Senate Education and Career Development Committee  
3/13/19

Good afternoon. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee for the opportunity to speak in support of House Bill 1003. My name is Kristien Hamilton. I am a 7th grade Math teacher at Greencastle Middle School in Greencastle, Indiana and a Teach Plus Indiana Teaching Policy Fellow.

When I think back to when I was in college, I knew in my heart that I wanted to be a 5th grade teacher. I studied to get a degree in Elementary Education, but unfortunately, upon the commencement of my degree, I found out elementary education was not an area of need due to a reduction in force. This was obviously a problem for me, so I spent many days investigating which areas of teaching were truly in demand and eventually found that math was an area of great need. Although I wasn't totally convinced middle school would be a good fit for me, I decided to give it a try and thankfully I fell in love and the rest is history.

I support House Bill 1003 because it will encourage local districts to take action to ensure they are using their funds as efficiently as possible, while also creating more transparency with data reporting around salary information in an effort to push dollars to the classroom. I am optimistic about the impact this bill will have, but want to take this opportunity to propose recommendations I believe will make the anticipated impact even greater.

How do we retain quality teachers? This is the question that has permeated the statewide dialogue the last few years. To prepare students for success, we must have teachers who are committed to staying in the classroom. As a Policy Fellow and invested educator, I have been working with other great teachers in the Fellowship to answer this very question. In our attempt to learn more, we struggled to find available statewide data of where shortages of teachers exist in Indiana, leading us to wonder if and how other states track this kind of teacher retention information.

Our research found that the majority of our neighboring states (most notably, Illinois and Minnesota) consistently publish an educator supply and demand report containing information regarding teacher transfers and available teaching positions. This publicly available report is compiled at the state level and then used to predict retention trends and patterns for each of the areas impacting and impacted by teacher turnover. In order to design targeted policies to better address teacher shortage, the 2019 Bellwether Report, Nuance in the Noise, makes the case for implementing robust data systems that better connect teacher supply and demand at the state level.

I think back to my experience in college. If only I had access to this sort of information in my pre-service days, it would have saved me countless hours and lots of anxiety. Let's do better for our incoming teachers.

HB1003 currently requires schools to prepare, publish, and submit a report that covers various pieces of employment information. I recommend expanding this public report and amending the bill to gather other existing data related to teacher retention such as an educator supply and demand report for a comprehensive understanding of teacher turnover in Indiana. We must improve transparency so all stakeholders can make more informed decisions to address teacher shortages or supply in our state.

I want to thank Representative DeVon and Representative Huston for authoring House Bill 1003. This bill will move our legislature in the right direction to begin improving teacher compensation, encouraging districts to become more transparent about how funds are distributed to administrative and teacher salaries. And I urge you to consider my recommendation for amendment and take an additional step to better understand the state of the teacher turnover in Indiana. Thank you.