

Shelby Phelps - HB1003 Testimony
Indiana House Education Committee
1/9/2019

Good morning. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee for the opportunity to speak in support of House Bill 1003. My name is Shelby Phelps. I am a high school English teacher in Evansville, Indiana and a Teach Plus Indiana Teaching Policy Fellow.

Just recently, I stood at the front of my classroom after facilitating a rigorous group activity. The room filled with sounds—groups discussing questions, loud footsteps, moving chairs, and students laughing. I smiled because I enjoy this active side of my teaching style almost as much as my students do.

“Thank you for giving me a sense of being,” my student Lauren said tearfully. “I have been feeling very down in the dumps recently and what we did today gave me a sense of accomplishment.” I told her she was at school for a reason. That she is smart, insightful, and brave. That she is valuable, and I’m proud of her. We part ways—Lauren to the bus to take her home and me to my second job, where I wait tables at a local pizza shop to make ends meet.

No public school teacher chooses this profession for the money. We do it for the comments like Lauren’s after a hard-worked lesson. We do our jobs to give our students a sense of accomplishment and a safe place to learn. However, Indiana teachers are increasingly leaving the classroom in search of better professional opportunities—ones that will pay them as experts in their field and recognize them as deserving professionals.

I’ve been rated “highly effective” on my past four evaluations. I have a Bachelor’s degree in English Education and a Master’s degree in English. I attend as many professional development opportunities as I can, constantly enriching my practice. I put in the time, the effort, and the heart to each and every one of my students, and I know that my work as a highly educated and trained professional is worth more than the \$580 that I am paid per week.

Indiana needs teachers like me, “highly effective” teachers that care for students and their education, teachers that are willing to go the extra mile, teachers that know their worth.

I want to thank Representative DeVon and Representative Huston for authoring House Bill 1003. It is the first step to begin improving teacher compensation, calling to districts to become more transparent about how funds are distributed to administrative and teacher salaries.

However, the time is now to allocate funds from the budget to increase teacher salaries. It’s about paying teachers what they deserve for the hard work, continued learning, and passion they infuse into their classrooms every day. More importantly, it’s about providing valuable educational experiences to students like Lauren. And I urge you, legislators, to create an environment where both students and teachers feel valued by those around them.

Thank you.