

Indiana Teacher Perspectives on Proposals to Address Teacher Retention in the 2019 Indiana General Assembly

Teacher compensation and retention are priority issues of the 2019 Indiana General Assembly. Teach Plus Indiana polled its network of teachers to understand their perspectives on the proposals to address teacher retention, specifically as related to pay and growth opportunities. The flash poll was shared with teachers from across Indiana between February 7 and February 20, 2019, and 504 Indiana public school teachers responded. Among the key findings: Overwhelmingly, teachers want to see substantial increases to base pay. Teachers also want to see investment from the state in their growth and leadership opportunities, as well as in improved teacher preparation.

Finding #1: Teachers want additional revenue to pay for substantial increases to base pay.

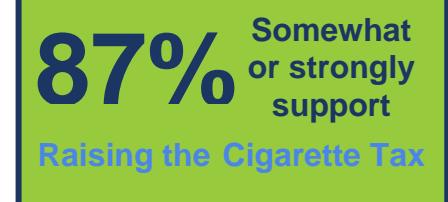
Indiana legislators and state leaders have introduced three proposals to direct more money toward education and teacher salaries (Figure 1).¹ While teachers favor all of them, they are most strongly in favor of dedicated additional sources of revenue that will pay for increases in teacher salaries in a sustainable, long-term manner.

Figure 1: Teacher perspectives on three proposals to direct more money towards teacher pay.

Proposal	Strongly Support or Somewhat Support	Strongly Oppose or Somewhat Oppose
Increase Cigarette Tax by \$1: Create a supplemental teacher compensation fund with teachers receiving \$2000 stipends.	87%	8%
Pension Plan Payoff: One-time payment of \$140 million to school districts to pay off local pension plan obligations.	62%	22%
Non-Mandatory Expenditure Targets: Increase local transparency and encourage districts to limit operations to 15% of overall funding.	59%	13%

Increase Cigarette Tax by \$1: Teachers expressed the strongest support for [House Bill 1396](#),² introduced by Representative Tony Cook, which creates new revenue by increasing cigarette taxes to pay for teacher supplemental pay. All Indiana teachers would receive a \$2,000 stipend as a part of this legislation.

Health-conscious teachers supported this proposal because it will benefit teachers while also dissuading smokers, with one educator saying "*It does two things. It raises pay enough to make a difference and does so across the board. Secondly, it adds extra incentive to quit smoking by raising the price of cigarettes, which seems like an added benefit.*"³ Yet there was some concern that this type of tax would target low-income populations who have a tendency to smoke more, effectively further disadvantaging certain demographics. "*I do think taxing things like cigarettes which are damaging to public health make sense, but I also know that this is often a tax on the poor which worries me,*"⁴ said one teacher. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention support this claim.⁵



Pension Plan Payoff: Governor Holcomb has proposed increasing teacher pay by paying off \$140 million of local debt due to teacher pensions, allowing surplus money to be used toward teacher pay.⁶ While the majority of teachers supported this proposal, some teachers expressed skepticism around where the freed-up local funds would actually go. Many educators commented that if the money should go to teacher pay, then the legislation should have specific wording to ensure accountability rather than letting districts decide what to do with the dollars.⁷

Another group of respondents indicated that even if teachers receive an increase in pay due to this proposal, it would not be sustainable. These teachers called for more long-term solutions that are not tied to pensions or temporary bailouts, *“Increasing teacher pay should be increasing teacher pay, not tied into any other financial obligations. Teacher pay is not equal across the state. The pension reduction will not create equal pay increases across the state. If you want to increase teacher pay, to be competitive with neighboring states, invest more money into teacher pay.”*⁸

Non-mandatory Expenditure Targets: [House Bill 1003](#)⁹ proposes that districts create a summary report on spending, including data on average teacher and administrative salaries in their district. Additionally, the bill encourages limits on operations spending to 15 percent of the districts' overall state allocated funding. A majority of teachers supported this bill, but worried about its implementation. A teacher who supported the bill stated, *“I believe districts need to be more transparent with their spending and there should be more checks and balances over district spending ensuring that funds are spent in the appropriate places.”*¹⁰ Many of the survey respondents felt transparency and accountability were needed due to the belief that their district spends too much on administration and not enough on classroom teachers. The teachers who opposed this bill cited paperwork involved in school expenditures and concern that the 15 percent operations cap would not allow enough flexibility to districts to operate well.

“I support using budget surplus to pay off pension plan obligations, but do not feel that the districts should be able to use the money at their discretion unless it is in a way that accomplishes the original intent, to increase teacher pay.”

Finding #2: Teachers want to reallocate the funds used for the Teacher Appreciation Grants to provide a modest increase in base pay.

In 2016, the Indiana General Assembly appropriated \$30 million dollars toward the creation of Teacher Appreciation Grants (TAG).¹¹ The program has received mixed reviews and the dollars appropriated to this program are a possible source of funding to increase overall compensation. While the vast majority of teachers supported repurposing the TAG dollars to provide a modest increase in all teachers' base pay, they did not feel this was enough of an increase to be worthwhile (see Figure 2).¹²

Figure 2: Teacher perspectives on Teacher Appreciation Grant Funds.

Proposal	Strongly Support or Somewhat Support	Strongly Oppose or Somewhat Oppose
Reallocate funds currently used for the Teacher Appreciation Grants to provide a modest increase (approximately \$500) in all teachers' base pay.	77%	16%
Reallocate funds currently used for the Teacher Appreciation Grants to increase the tax credit for school supplies from \$100 to \$500.	47%	35%
Do not reallocate Teacher Appreciation Grant funds and continue the program as is.	29%	45%

Noted one teacher: *“Teacher appreciation grants have been unfairly distributed and do not serve the purpose of retaining quality teachers.”*¹³ Another commented, *“I think it would be best for it to be utilized for increases in salary, but it will not be enough of a raise to keep teachers from leaving Indiana or the profession.”*¹⁴ The biggest push was to increase pay at large, with one teacher putting it succinctly: *“This shouldn't just be about reallocation, more money needs to be allocated for education as a whole.”*¹⁵

Finding #3: Teachers value opportunities to continue growing as professionals and want to see the state of Indiana invest at least \$5 million in a Career Ladder Pilot Program.

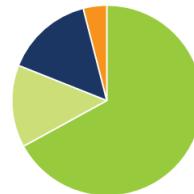
Teacher Career Ladder Grant Program: [House Bill 1008](#)¹⁶ proposes the creation of a Teacher Career Ladder Grant program. Career ladders create opportunities for teacher leadership and development and can improve teacher retention. Two-thirds of the teachers in our survey were in favor of investing at least \$5 million dollars into creating this program that would allow districts to apply for funding to create or sustain teacher career ladders in their districts (Figure 3).¹⁷

As one teacher noted, “*Increasing leadership opportunities with increased pay could help with teacher retention, empowering good teachers to grow and develop others.*”¹⁸ Teachers surveyed agree that keeping good teachers in the classroom is an important incentive and that opportunities need to be offered equally to those who desire them. Another teacher said, “*I think this is the single most powerfully catalyst for improvement in the profession.*”¹⁹ Teachers recognize that career ladders are a growth opportunity that can elevate the teaching profession and retain strong educators with support for the profession as a whole.

Finding #4: Teachers understand the significance of creating well-prepared teachers ready to teach children effectively and want to see the state of Indiana invest at least \$1 million in a Teacher Residency Pilot Program.

71% Somewhat or strongly support
Investing \$1 Million in a teacher residency grant pilot program.

Figure 3: Teacher Perspectives on Investing \$5 million in Teacher Career Ladders Grant Program



- Somewhat or strongly support = 67%
- Neither support nor oppose = 14%
- Somewhat or strongly oppose = 15%
- Unsure = 4%

Teacher Residency Grant Pilot Program: In order to better retain teachers, it is essential that we train new teachers well from the start. [House Bill 1009](#)²⁰ proposes the creation of Teacher Residency Grant Pilot Programs. Seven in ten teachers support investing \$1 million dollars in residency programs, which provide extended preservice experiences for teachers.²¹ One teacher said: “*Provide the potential teachers with an experience which will equip them for the actual classroom. Student teaching (not sure if it has changed in the last ten years) was only a semester when I was in grad. school. That is NOT long enough and in no way prepared me for the real classroom.*”²² When asked what would attract candidates to the profession, one participant shared, “*Scholarships to go into the teaching profession, higher income that compares to other professions a student may choose, and excellent college programming that prepares our teachers better for the demands placed on them.*”²³

ENDNOTES:

1. Question: "In an effort to create new revenue to allocate toward teacher compensation, House Bill 1396 proposes increasing the cigarette tax by \$1 per pack of regular size cigarettes with additional revenue deposited in a newly established teacher supplemental compensation fund. This fund would provide a supplemental payment of \$2000 each year to teachers who provide classroom instruction. To what degree do you support or oppose this proposal?" Responses: (n = 502) "Strongly support" (63.6 percent), "Somewhat support" (23.5 percent), "Neither support nor oppose" (3.6 percent), "Somewhat oppose" (3.0 percent), "Strongly oppose" (4.6 percent), "Unsure" (1.8 percent). Question: "In an effort to boost teacher pay, Governor Holcomb has proposed freeing up \$140 million dollars from the State Budget Surplus in the next two-year budget to pay off teacher pension obligations owed by school districts. Although, Governor Holcomb has recommended that districts use these savings to increase local teacher pay, districts could use this money at their discretion. To what degree do you support or oppose this proposal?" Responses: (n = 504) "Strongly support" (22.0 percent), "Somewhat support" (39.7 percent), "Neither support nor oppose" (9.9 percent), "Somewhat oppose" (13.5 percent), "Strongly oppose" (8.7 percent), "Unsure" (6.2 percent). Question: "Currently, while districts share and make available data on spending on their expenditures, they are not currently required to publicly release a report that summarizes this information. House Bill 1003 proposes to requiring districts to create a summary report on spending, including data on average teacher and administrative salaries in their district, while also encouraging districts to limit operations spending to 15% of their overall state allocated funding. To what degree do you support or oppose this proposal?" Responses: (n = 501) "Strongly support" (31.5 percent), "Somewhat support" (27.7 percent), "Neither support nor oppose" (19.2 percent), "Somewhat oppose" (8.0 percent), "Strongly oppose" (4.8 percent), "Unsure" (8.8 percent).
2. See <http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2019/bills/house/1396>
3. Question: "Why do you support or oppose this proposal?" Open response question.
4. See endnote 3.
5. See <https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/disparities/low-ses/index.htm>
6. See <https://www.apnews.com/c192c2d04ef54c848f113575235f637e>
7. Question: "What suggestions or ideas do you have regarding the best use of the freed up surplus monies proposed by Gov. Holcomb?" Open response question.
8. See endnote 7.
9. See <http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2019/bills/house/1003>
10. Question: "Why do you support or oppose this proposal?" Open response question.
11. See <https://www.doe.in.gov/evaluations/performance-based-awards>.
12. Question: "In 2016, the Indiana General Assembly appropriated \$30 million dollars toward the creation of Teacher Appreciation Grants which would be given to Indiana teachers rated effective or highly effective as bonuses. Going into this legislative session, this grant money has been identified as a possible source of funding to raise pay for all teachers. To what degree do you support or oppose the following proposals: Proposal: "Reallocate funds currently used for the Teacher Appreciation Grants to increase the tax credit for school supplies from \$100 to \$500." Responses: (n=495) "Strongly support" (25.3 percent), "Somewhat support" (21.4 percent), "Neither support nor oppose" (16.6 percent), "Somewhat oppose" (14.8 percent), "Strongly oppose" (19.8 percent), "Unsure" (2.2 percent). Proposal: "Reallocate funds currently used for the Teacher Appreciation Grants to provide a modest increase (approximately \$500) in all teachers' base pay." Responses: (n=498) "Strongly support" (49.0 percent), "Somewhat support" (28.3 percent), "Neither support nor oppose" (4.6 percent), "Somewhat oppose" (8.2 percent), "Strongly oppose" (8.2 percent), "Unsure" (1.6 percent). Proposal: "Do not reallocate Teacher Appreciation Grant funds and continue the program as is." Responses: (n=479) "Strongly support" (10.9 percent), "Somewhat support" (17.8 percent), "Neither support nor oppose" (21.7 percent), "Somewhat oppose" (17.8 percent), "Strongly oppose" (27.0 percent), "Unsure" (5.0 percent).
13. Question: "What suggestions or ideas do you have regarding the best use of the monies currently used for Teacher Appreciation Grants?" Open response question.
14. See endnote 13.
15. See endnote 13.
16. See <http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2019/bills/house/1008>
17. Question: "Teacher retention is an ongoing struggle for many districts in Indiana, with teachers often leaving the classroom in search of more leadership opportunities. Teacher Career Ladder programs create compensated leadership roles for effective teachers to take on leadership responsibilities without leaving the classroom to become an administrator. House Bill 1008 proposes allocating at least \$5 million dollars toward the establishment of a grant program that would allow districts to apply for funding to create or sustain teacher career ladders in their district. To what degree do you support or oppose this proposal? Responses: (n = 500) "Strongly support" (37.6 percent), "Somewhat support" (29.0 percent), "Neither support nor oppose" (14.2 percent), "Somewhat oppose" (6.0 percent), "Strongly oppose" (8.8 percent), "Unsure" (4.4 percent).
18. Question: "Why do you support or oppose this proposal?" Open response question.
19. See endnote 17.
20. See <http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2019/bills/house/1009>
21. Question: "New teachers often report leaving the classroom due to feeling overwhelmed and unprepared. Year-long teacher residency programs allow incoming teachers the opportunity to student-teach in a classroom setting under the guidance of a mentor teacher while also continuing in their education. Residency programs have been shown to help better prepare and retain teachers in the profession. House Bill 1009 proposes allocating at least \$1 million dollars toward the establishment of a teacher residency grant pilot program. To what degree do you support or oppose this proposal?" Responses: (n = 503) "Strongly support" (40.0 percent), "Somewhat support" (30.8 percent), "Neither support nor oppose" (11.1 percent), "Somewhat oppose" (8.0 percent), "Strongly oppose" (7.4 percent), "Unsure" (2.8 percent).
22. Question: "How can the State of Indiana make the teaching profession more attractive to potential teaching candidates?" Open response question.
23. See endnote 22.