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House of Representatives
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

COMMITTEES

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LIQUOR CONTROL

April 10, 2024

The Honorable Jordan Harris
PA House of Representatives
512-E Main Capitol Bldg.
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Chairman Harris:

As your office prepares to develop a Fiscal Year 2024-2025 state budget bill, we respectfully request the inclusion of \$75 million for the Student Teacher Support Program.

We are appreciative that Gov. Shapiro's administration has recognized the value of supporting student teachers with stipends as part of a statewide strategy to address the educator shortage. Unfortunately, the combination of the \$10 million available from the current year's budget and the proposed \$15 million next fiscal year is far below estimates of what will be needed to fully fund the program beginning this fall. The Pennsylvania House of Representatives can, and should, make this improvement to Gov. Shapiro's proposed FY 24-25 state budget.

The Basic Education Funding Commission (BEFC) Majority report identifies a \$75 million need for student teacher stipends. We believe that our caucus should follow the findings and recommendations of the BEFC Majority report and meet the forthcoming demand from prospective educators.

During the House Appropriations hearing, PDE projected that there would be 5,000 aspiring educators participating in their 12-week student teacher experience next year, with about 30 percent of students completing their practicum in the fall. Just last week in comments to PennLive, PHEAA estimated that only 700 students will benefit from the program with the \$10 million investment in this year's budget.

The current unpaid student teacher experience often discourages or prohibits young people from entering the field. And it is certainly a deterrent for second-career adults who likely have families to support and bigger financial commitments to uphold. We cannot address our teacher shortage and

encourage more people to make the decision to enter our classrooms unless we can provide those prospective teachers with certainty that the Student Teacher Support Program is fully funded.

Please include \$75 million in the House Democratic Caucus's FY 24-25 budget proposal to ensure support for this important program. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,



State Representative Danielle Friel Otten
155th Legislative District
Chester County



State Representative Gina H. Curry
164th Legislative District
Delaware County