



TSTA MEMBER TESTIMONY ON HB 100

Good morning. My name is Krystina Symington and I am a current teacher in Austin ISD. I am standing in front of you today to shed light on the current state of public education in regard to teacher pay and why I am testifying against HB 100. I would like to preface this speech with the fact that I come from a long line of teaching. My mother has been teaching for 35 years, my aunts, uncle, and cousins are in the profession. One could say that it runs deep in my blood. I remember the countless hours spent at my mom's school — from watching her plan and prep when I was young to assisting and tutoring as I grew older. It was and is a job to be revered, but nonetheless a tiresome one. It is the reason I swore I would never be a teacher.

Yet, if this were true, I would not be here speaking in front of you today. So let me take you back to 2016. It was the time I was preparing for graduate school. In the interim, I began substitute teaching. In this time I filled a couple vacancies. Imagine doe-eyed middle schoolers with no teacher giving me hugs and asking for me to come back every day. They were craving routine, knowledge, and relative experiences. Fast forward to 2023...I am currently finishing my 5th year of teaching while holding a Masters in secondary education. I think it is safe to say that I got the bug and teaching is without a doubt my passion. It was those students that implored me to enter the profession and is my WHY.

Unfortunately, it is with great sadness that many teachers are being pushed away from this invaluable career due to economic hardships. Both the current and proposed teacher pay is unsustainable. Many teachers are working second jobs. I too have found myself considering bartending on the weekends to make ends meet.

I have friends and colleagues who are contemplating leaving the profession altogether. They are being presented with choices such as secretarial or retail work as a full time career. It might surprise you, but these positions currently pay more, have greater benefits, and offer less stress. One teacher I know has already made the change. She is presently working at Costco full time; another colleague has considered working at Target.

That being said, I believe teachers deserve a livable salary because teaching is more than an 8-5 job. We assume many hats in our role. We are social workers, therapists, behaviorists, interventionists, the list goes on. There is not a day that goes by where I am not concerned about the physical and mental wellbeing of my students. For example, I lay in bed wondering if one of my students is going to be able to have a safe place to sleep at night. I wonder what little Stevie enjoys in his free time and how I can integrate that into our lesson the next day, maybe then he will participate. I wonder what I can do after school to give our kids a safe space to attend that will keep them off the streets and out of trouble. Myself and every other teacher carry these burdens with us. Teaching is more than a profession, it is our calling.

However, If the state of Texas wishes to continue to cultivate strong, future leaders, we need to invest in our teachers. We need pay that coincides with both inflation and the cost of living in 2023. We need more and we need to do better and that begins with a livable income; our kids and our future depend on it.

Thank You.