

House Education

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SB21-185 Supporting Educator Workforce In Colorado

Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
Terry Friedrichs For Black Educators Network	Testimony of Terry Friedrichs, Ph. D. Ed. D., a Legislative Liaison for Colorado Black Educators Network, on Behalf of Senate Bill 21-185 As a 40-year teacher of students in general, special, and gifted education, and as a legislative liaison from Black Educators Network of Colorado, I recall vividly many young students of various cultures telling me that they enjoyed learning so much that they wanted to be teachers. While the coming years did not prove to some of these students as enthrusing as the previous years did, there is now hope on the horizon in the form of Senate Bill 21-185. Among other helpful aspects, this bill creates the Teacher Recruitment Education and Preparation (TREP) program to create a larger and more diverse teaching force. This bill allows Colorado students to be more optimistic about their hopes for a future in teaching, to see diverse teaching role models, and to eventually become themselves diverse teaching representatives who serve as anchors within their communities. The bill wisely provides districts with funding to make the program a reality and continuously analyzes TREP program outcomes to see if the program could be improved for the benefit of students, the teaching profession, and the state. I strongly encourage the Senate to support this bill.

Written Comments in Support of SB21-185 – Supporting Educator Workforce in Colorado

House Education Committee – May 12, 2021

Leslie Colwell – Vice President of Education Initiatives, Colorado Children’s Campaign

Members of the House Education Committee,

I appreciate the opportunity to submit comments in support of Senate Bill 185 because of the potential benefits to Colorado’s educator workforce and to our kids.

I want to first speak highly of the extensive ESRII process that led to this bill, in which the Children’s Campaign was a participant. This bill is based on the recommendations of dozens of stakeholders in a months-long process to identify systemic shifts needed in Colorado’s education system.

In any non-pandemic school year, I have the opportunity to travel around the state to visit with district administrators, educators, and parents about the unique educational opportunities and challenges in their communities. In the seven years I’ve been with the Children’s Campaign, the most universal and urgent theme I hear in these visits is how every district struggles in some way with recruitment and retention of educator talent.

The anecdotes I hear have been confirmed each year in the data we see about teacher shortages across the state – and we know that all of these workforce challenges have only been exacerbated during the COVID pandemic. A [survey](#) conducted earlier this year of 5,000 CO Education Association members showed that 40 percent of licensed teachers are weighing an exit from the profession after this school year.

Meeting these challenges will require creative, *systemic* solutions, and collaboration among state agencies and institutions to reimagine what entry into the profession can look like. This bill directs state resources, in a targeted and thoughtful way, to specific strategies to accomplish each of these goals.

On a personal note I want to share that I’m a former teacher, and even though both of my parents were educators, I never thought about teaching as a career myself until my senior year of college when I was recruited by an alternative preparation program. I’m hopeful that our high school and post-secondary students in Colorado will start thinking about education as a profession much earlier than I did if we can implement the package of strategies in this bill.

Thank you to Reps. McLachlan and McCluskie for consistently championing policies to bolster our K-12 workforce and the educational experiences of our students, and thank you to you all for your consideration of SB-185.