

[Written Testimony for HR8266: Teacher Pathways Study Commission]

To the House Committee on Education,

I am submitting this testimony today in strong support of House Resolution 8266 to create a special legislative commission to study teacher pathways, support and retention.

Our students, our young people, our future leaders, deserve well-prepared teachers in all of their classrooms. Unfortunately, due to the teacher shortage, many students are being taught by a rotation of substitutes or underprepared personnel. This creates not only an educational shortfall and inequitable learning environment, but also creates a lack of stability in a vital role in a young person's life and academic learning journey. While the *teacher shortage* issue is critical, we simultaneously have issues of *limited access* into the teaching profession and *lack of support and rampant burnout* within the teaching profession. If we want to prioritize the education and wellbeing of our young people in the state of Rhode Island, we **must** prioritize solving these three critical issues.

While the issues at hand are complex they are not complicated. With intentional study, funding, resources and support, we can solve the teaching crisis in Rhode Island and become a leader in educator workforce development. In order to do so, we need a dedicated legislative commission to study the full landscape of teacher recruitment, preparation, retention and development- with student learning and wellbeing at the center. Below is a list of some of the numerous aspects that need close examination and consideration:

- Why fewer traditional college graduates are becoming certified teachers
- Why so many teachers get burned out by the job
- Why so many educators leave the field of education
- How we can increase access to the teaching profession (for paraprofessionals, substitute teachers, career-changers, community educators etc.)
- How we can support early career teachers through on the job learning, mentorship etc.
- How we can better support teachers throughout their careers
- How school environments can be shaped to support the wellbeing of not only students but all of their educators as well
- How to increase the diversity (linguistically, racially, culturally) of the teaching profession to better represent the student body
- How to meet the needs of the rapidly growing multilingual learner population
- How to better serve the needs of students with IEPs and other special learning needs
- How to better educate teachers on the skills, tools and resources needed to support their own wellbeing as well as the wellbeing of their students
- How to better prepare teachers to understand the shifting job market and necessary career readiness skills
- How to increase career preparation pathways in a wide range of fields, including education
- How to make teaching a more sustainable and economically stable profession
- How to clarify and simplify the certification process

- How to provide more job-embedded learning opportunities for pre-service teachers such as through apprenticeship and paid residency models
- How to better coach and prepare pre-service teachers for not only the classroom, but the career of teaching
- How to recruit the best and brightest from diverse backgrounds to become the leaders and change-makers that the educational system needs and that our young people deserve

If we want to do right by students, we have to do better for teachers: from early-interest, to pre-service, to early-career, to lifelong educators. Our students deserve high quality well-prepared teachers who have the skills, tools and resources to meet the academic and holistic needs of all children. And our teachers deserve the preparation and ongoing support to develop and sustain their own career and wellbeing. A well prepared and supported educator can change the trajectory of their students' lives. And every student deserves to have the educational preparation and opportunity to pursue their dreams and contribute to our communities. Together, we can deliver this bright future.

This is why I strongly support House Resolution 8266. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Aubrey Schabowsky

Educator/ Writer/ Advocate

(Former Director of the Transformative Education Pathway at College Unbound)