

**INNOVATIVE TEACHER PREPARATION:  
PROPERLY EQUIPPING AMERICA'S EDUCATORS**

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**HEARING**

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON EARLY CHILDHOOD,  
ELEMENTARY, AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE  
WORKFORCE

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

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HEARING HELD IN WASHINGTON, DC, SEPTEMBER 25, 2024

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**Serial No. 118-64**

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Printed for the use of the Committee on Education and the Workforce



Available via: [edworkforce.house.gov](https://edworkforce.house.gov) or [www.govinfo.gov](https://www.govinfo.gov)

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U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

57-829 PDF

WASHINGTON : 2025

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**INNOVATIVE TEACHER PREPARATION:  
PROPERLY EQUIPPING AMERICA'S  
EDUCATORS**

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**Wednesday, September 25, 2024**

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EARLY CHILDHOOD, ELEMENTARY,  
AND SECONDARY EDUCATION,  
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE,  
*Washington, DC.*

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:17, a.m., in Room 2175, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Aaron Bean (Chairman of the Subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Bean, Owens, Kiley, Foxx, Bonamici, Hayes, Wilson, and DeSaulnier.

Staff present: Annmarie Graham Barnes, Deputy Communications Director; Mindy Barry, General Counsel; Sheila Havenner, Director of Information Technology; Amy Raaf Jones, Director of Education and Human Services Policy; Andrew Kuzy, Press Assistant; Georgie Littlefair, Clerk; Hannah Matesic, Deputy Staff Director; Audra McGeorge, Communications Director; Carson Middleton, Staff Director; Eli Mitchell, Legislative Assistant; Jacob Pletcher, Staff Assistant; Brad Thomas, Deputy Director of Education and Human Services Policy; Maura Williams, Director of Operations; Ellie Berenson, Minority Press Secretary; Ilana Brunner, Minority General Counsel; Nikita Chellani, Minority Intern; Rashage Green, Minority Director of Education Policy & Counsel; Brandon Hernandez, Minority CHCI Fellow; Samantha Wilkerson, Minority Professional Staff, ; Stephanie Lalle, Minority Communications Director; Raiyana Malone, Minority Press Secretary; Brashanda McCoy, Minority CBCF Intern; Marie McGrew, Minority Press Assistant; Eleazar Padilla, Minority Staff Assistant; Veronique Pluiose, Minority Staff Director; Isabella Sanchez, Minority Intern; Banyon Vassar, Minority Director of IT.

Chairman BEAN. Ladies and gentlemen, a very good morning to you. Welcome to your nation's capital, to the Committee on Education and the Workforce, and specifically the Subcommittee on Early Learning, Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education.

The Committee will come to order. I note that a quorum is present, and without objection, the Chair is authorized to call a recess at any time. Okay. We have all been there, we have all been there driving our car when the warning light comes on, some light,

oh my gosh, how bad is it? Is it going to—is it really bad, or not? Is it a warning light that we can decipher, or not?

It will come on at the worst possible time. It is going to be raining, or you are going to be in the middle of nowhere, and then you know that it is time to either to get it fixed, or to go forward. I had a friend in college who drove an older model car, and his warning light was flashing.

He said, “I can fix it.” He took a roll of black duct tape, and just taped it over his dashboard, not recommended. His car collapsed soon thereafter, and so take care of your car. Take care of whatever is you have the responsibility to take care of.

American has a responsibility to take care of our education system. It is key that we have leaders that we growth leaders for tomorrow. Right now, if we were looking at our education system the warning light would be on, and I say that because the numbers are indeed alarming. Here are some numbers. 86 percent of public schools reported difficulties in hiring teachers for the 2023–2024 school year.

Between 2020 and 2022, 16 percent of teachers say they have said I have had it. I am done. I am going somewhere else. Teachers often feel disheartened. 20 percent say they are satisfied with the jobs, meaning 80 percent are not saying that. 16 percent would recommend the profession to others.

With that said, it is apparent that these are not just statistics, they are a flashing red light on the dashboard of our education system. Part of the solution perhaps, could be affordable, accessible pathways into the classroom. Traditional teacher preparations programs can take up to four, 5 years to complete, and come with a sticker price, sometimes upwards of tens of thousands of dollars.

The costs are simply too high for many perspective teachers with evaluating how much it costs, what is the return on the investment. It does not take a math whiz to find out that you have to have a love of teaching. You are not doing it just for the money. The costs can send people running for the exits before they even enter the pipeline.

That is why today we are going to discuss alternative certification programs. They have been gaining national attention. Today let us get to the bottom of it. Many say that there are efficient, cost-effective ways to get talented individuals, that is what we want, talented individuals into the classroom. Between 2018 and 2021, enrollment in these different types of programs has increased by 20 percent.

The programs many times offer a faster path to certifications for individuals who have expertise in their fields, and I think passion for kids and learning, and jumping into the arena. It is not about getting teachers in the classroom. It is about keeping them there. The reality is that way too many teachers leave their profession because they do not feel supported and valued.

We need to rethink the way we structure the teaching profession. We are going to hear from innovative programs like Arizona State’s Next Education Workforce. They are doing just that by reimaging the traditional model for one teacher, one classroom, new approaches can provide teachers and students room to flourish.

For example, third graders in ASU's team-based teaching schools experience an extra 1.4 months of reading growth each year and what about math? That is what you are asking me, Aaron tell us about math. Their algebra 1 students pass at rates 4 to 7 percentage points higher than their peers in traditional classrooms.

Teacher turnover and satisfaction also has greatly improved. These results show that we cannot treat teachers like revolving doors and still expect schools to thrive. We just want our kids to do well. Why are they not teaching them? We have got to give teachers everything, every tool we can to succeed.

Other colleges, as Appalachian State have developed similar models. Yes, it is another ASU. Appalachian State presses harder to expand these ideas. They said it is time to think boldly and spotlight changes that will not only bring more people into their teaching profession, but ensure that they also want to stay that.

With that, members, I have got great news. We once again, this Subcommittee is known to putting together all-star panels, and we have done that today. In just a moment, members, we are going to turn to you, our guests listen to the cutting edge, what is happening in the field of how we can do it.

First, let me yield to the Ranking Member for her opening statement. Ranking Member.

[The Statement of Chairman Bean follows:]

STATEMENT OF HON. AARON BEAN, CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON EARLY CHILDHOOD, ELEMENTARY, AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Have you ever been in your car when you get an alert notifying you something is wrong? Let us face it. There is no such thing as a good time for a warning light to signal a problem. Having your morning commute interrupted by a mechanical failure is an inconvenience at best and a downright emergency at worst. The warning lights are there to help signal that action should be taken.

I like to consider myself to be a very optimistic person, but I will say this: When it comes to our K-12 education system, we are facing a giant "WARNING!"

America's teacher preparation pipeline is struggling.

I will be blunt: the numbers are alarming. Eighty-six percent of public schools reported difficulties in hiring teachers for the 2023-2024 school year. Between 2020 and 2022, 16 percent of teachers left their schools. Teachers are feeling disheartened, and only 20 percent say they are very satisfied with their jobs. Just 16 percent would recommend the profession to others. With that said, it should be very apparent that these are not just statistics—they are a flashing red light on the dashboard of our education system.

Part of the solution is more affordable, accessible pathways into the classroom. Traditional teacher preparation programs can take four to five years to complete and come with a sticker price of up to \$100,000. These costs are simply too high for many prospective teachers. The upfront investment is enough to send teachers running for the exits before they even start.

That is why alternative certification programs are gaining traction as a more efficient, cost-effective way to get talented individuals into the classroom. Between 2018 and 2021, enrollment in alternative programs increased by 20 percent. These programs offer a faster path to certification for individuals who already have expertise in other fields. It is not just about getting teachers into the classroom—it is about keeping them there. The reality is that too many teachers leave the profession because they do not feel supported and valued. We need to rethink the way we structure the teaching profession. Innovative programs like Arizona State University's (ASU) Next Education Workforce are doing just that. By reimagining the traditional model of one teacher, one classroom, new approaches can provide teachers and students room to flourish.

For example, third graders in ASU's team-based teaching schools experience an extra 1.4 months of reading growth each year, and Algebra I students pass at rates four to seven percentage points higher than their peers in traditional classrooms.

Teacher turnover and satisfaction also greatly improve. These results show that we cannot treat teachers like revolving doors and still expect our schools to thrive.

Other colleges such as Appalachian State have developed similar models. We must continue to press harder and expand these ideas further. It is time to think boldly and spotlight changes that will not only bring more people into the teaching profession but will also ensure that they want to stay there.

Ms. BONAMICI. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the witnesses for being here today. We look forward to the conversation. I am optimistic that we can have a meaningful and bipartisan conversation about the importance of growing and supporting a diverse and dynamic educator workforce that meets the complex needs of our country's students, and provides them—all of them, with the opportunity for a world-class education.

Ms. Pat Dorian was my high school English teacher, and changed my life, as well as the lives of many other students I went to school with. She instilled in me a love of language, and poetry, but more importantly, a love of learning. I expect that many of you in the room today have similar stories and remember a teacher or two who changed your lives.

Teachers educate, mentor, inspire, nurture and guide students. They are role models, community builders, and partners of knowledge and critical thinking. Unfortunately, the path to becoming a teacher presents many obstacles. It typically requires years of expensive schooling, testing and certification.

The skyrocketing price of higher education, which is something I hope we can work on in this Committee, acts as a significant barrier to many who hope to become educators. Certification can be expensive and complicated to obtain with mountains of paperwork that deter prospective educators, sometimes even before they begin their careers.

In many places teachers are notoriously underpaid, when adjusted for inflation, teachers' salaries have been stagnant since 1990, while the cost of living rises, and the cost of a 4-year degree has nearly doubled since that time. Also, students do better when they see themselves reflected in their teachers.

According to North Carolina State College of Education Associate Professor Dr. Egalite, sorry, as we will hear in testimony today students of color experience a variety of benefits when they are placed in a classroom with a teacher who shares their racial or ethnic background, and Mr. El-Mekki will be discussing that.

Despite 50 percent of students identifying as persons of color, educators of color make up just 19 percent of teachers in this country. Research also shows that a diverse teacher workforce benefits all student achievement, regardless of race. Congress must do more to support prospective black and brown educators to better represent children of all demographics in our schools.

When examining these challenges, it might seem tempting to bolster the teacher workforce by de-professionalizing the job, whether that be by removing, or reducing education or certification requirements, but that approach would only harm students who benefit from a well prepared teacher to guide them through their education.

Instead of lowering the standards, we should be streamlining the process of becoming a teacher and recruiting more students to be

educators through apprenticeship and mentoring programs for new teachers, through student loan forgiveness, and through competitive compensation.

I am not one to complain about a problem without offering solutions. The Biden-Harris administration has encouraged using effective and innovative teacher preparation programs, including strategies that focus on recruiting and retaining diverse candidates. Congress can build on this initiative by providing resources to help support successful innovative teacher preparation models across the country.

The Build Back Better Act provided more than 100 million dollars for grants to fund Grow Your Own programs, that supported high need schools in subject areas, as well as improving diversity within the teacher workforce. To address the teacher shortage in this country, we also must support Title I schools and expand loan forgiveness like the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program to support those who dream of becoming teachers.

The College Affordability Act, which advanced through this Committee in 2020, outlined several ways to give aspiring teachers a hand as they pursue their education. The College Affordability Act would improve programs that recruit perspective teachers, especially to address shortage areas, like STEM and special education.

It would also improve and expand that public service loan forgiveness program to provide that all teachers loan payments count toward their eligibility for loan repayment, and keep in mind that these public service loan forgiveness borrowers do pay, according to income, during their time of teaching. It is the balance at the end that is forgiven.

We should strengthen Title II, professional development programs and initiatives that support recruiting and retaining diverse educators. The Teacher Diversity and Retention Act, introduced by several members of this Committee, would also bolster teacher recruitment programs by establishing grant programs for education students at HBCUs, and other minority serving institutions.

As well as providing dual certification in special education and behavior management, so teachers can meet the needs of every student. There are also wonderful mentoring and coaching programs that support educators and improve retention. Finally, Mr. Chairman, I encourage us all to encourage people to go into the teaching profession by recognizing the importance of our system, the public education, and not bashing it.

I think bashing public education discourages people from wanting to go work there. Of course we can work together on improvements to the system, but let us lift up educators who choose to teach. I look forward to hearing from all of our witnesses, and to a productive discussion today, and I yield back the balance of my time.

[The Statement of Ranking Member Bonamici follows:]

STATEMENT OF HON. SUZANNE BONAMICI, RANKING MEMBER, SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
EARLY CHILDHOOD, ELEMENTARY, AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to our witnesses for being here today. I am optimistic that we can have a meaningful, bipartisan conversation about the importance of growing and supporting a diverse and dynamic educator workforce that

meets the complex needs of our country's students and provides them—all of them—with the opportunity for a world class education.

Ms. Pat Dorrian, my high school English teacher, changed my life. She instilled in me a love of language and poetry, but more importantly a love of learning. I expect that many of you in this room today have similar stories and remember a teacher or two who changed your lives. Teachers educate, mentor, inspire, nurture, and guide students. They are role models, community builders, and imparters of knowledge and critical thinking.

Unfortunately, the path to becoming a teacher presents many obstacles. It typically requires years of expensive schooling, testing, and certification. The skyrocketing price of education acts as a significant barrier to many who hope to become educators. Certification can be expensive and complicated to obtain, with mountains of paperwork that deter prospective educators sometimes even before they begin their careers. In many places teachers are notoriously underpaid. When adjusted for inflation, teacher salaries have been stagnant since 1990, while the cost of living rises every year and the cost of a four-year degree has nearly doubled since that time.

Students do better when they see themselves reflected in their teachers. According to NC State College of Education Associate Professor Dr. Anna Egalite, and as we will hear in testimony today, students of color experience a variety of benefits when they are placed in a classroom with a teacher who shares their racial or ethnic background.

Despite 50 percent of students identifying as persons of color, educators of color make up just 19 percent of teachers in this country. Research also shows that a diverse teacher workforce benefits all student achievement regardless of race. Congress must do more to support prospective Black and Brown educators to better represent children of all demographics in schools.

When examining these problems, it might seem tempting to bolster the teacher workforce by “de-professionalizing” the job, whether that be by removing certifications or reducing educational requirements. That approach, however, would only harm students, who rely on well-trained teachers to guide them through their education. Instead of lowering the standards, we should streamline the process of becoming a teacher and recruit more students to be educators through apprenticeship and mentoring programs for new teachers, student loan forgiveness, and competitive compensation.

I am not one to complain about a problem without offering a solution.

The Biden-Harris Administration has encouraged using effective and innovative teacher preparation programs, including strategies that focus on recruiting and retaining diverse candidates. Congress can build on this initiative by providing resources to help support successful innovative teacher preparation models across the country. The *Build Back Better Act* provided more than \$100 million for grants to fund “Grow Your Own” programs that support high-need schools and subject areas, as well as improve diversity within the teacher workforce.

To address the teacher shortage in this country, we must support Title I schools and expand loan forgiveness to support those who dream of becoming teachers. The *College Affordability Act*, which advanced through this committee in 2020, outlined ways to give aspiring teachers a hand as they pursue their education. The CAA would improve programs that recruit prospective teachers to address shortage areas, like STEM and special education. It would also improve and expand the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program to ensure that all teachers' loan payments count toward their eligibility for loan repayment.

We should also strengthen Title II programs and initiatives that support recruiting and retaining diverse educators in our communities. The *Teacher Diversity and Retention Act*, introduced by members of this committee, would also bolster teacher recruitment programs by establishing grant programs for education students at HBCUs and other Minority Serving Institutions, as well as providing dual certification in special education and behavioral management so that teachers can meet the need of every student. There are also mentoring and coaching programs that support educators and improve retention.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses and to a productive discussion today. Thank you, and I yield back.

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Chairman BEAN. Thank you very much, Ranking Member. Pursuant to Committee Rule 8(c), all Committee members who wish to insert written materials into the record may do so by submitting to the Committee Clerk electronically in Microsoft Word format by

5 p.m. after 14 days from the date of this hearing, which is October 9, 2024.

Without objection, the hearing record will remain open for 14 days after this date to allow such statement and other extraneous material referenced in the hearing to be submitted for the official hearing record.

Now it is time to introduce our distinguished all-star panel of witnesses. Our first witness is Dr. Carole Basile, who is Dean of the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College at Arizona State University, located in Tempe, Arizona. Her work has centered on redesigning the education workforce and changing practices in teaching and leadership preparation.

She is currently working with education organizations nationally, and internationally to design systems and enable organizational change in these areas. Prior to joining ASU, Dr. Basile was Dean and Professor of the College of Education at the University of Missouri in St. Louis. Welcome, Dr. Basile.

Our second witness is Dr. Melba Spooner, who is Dean of the Reich College of Education at Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina. She began her higher education career at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, where she was a faculty member, and served in various roles in the College of Education, including Assistant Dean.

Dr. Spooner earned her education doctorate in curriculum and teaching from the University of North Carolina in Greensboro, and her master's and bachelor's degrees in early childhood education from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Welcome, Dr. Spooner.

Our third witness will be introduced by our Ranking Member. You are recognized.

Ms. BONAMICI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We welcome Mr. Sharif El-Mekki, the Founder and CEO of the Center for Black Educator Development, an organization dedicated to transforming the teaching profession and ensuring that black educators are supported and celebrated.

Prior to establishing the Center, Mr. El-Mekki served at the U.S. Department of Education as Principal Ambassador Fellow under the Obama administration—previously had served as the Principal of Mastery Charter Shoemaker in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

In 2014, Mr. El-Mekki founded the Fellowship Black Male Educators for Social Justice, and it is an initiative aimed at recruiting, retaining and developing black male teachers. Mr. El-Mekki holds a BA in criminal justice from Indiana University at Pennsylvania, and a master's in elementary education and an administrative certification from Cheyney University. Welcome, Mr. El-Mekki.

Chairman BEAN. Welcome, Mr. El-Mekki. Our final witness is Dr. Greg Mendez, who is Principal of Skyline High School in Mesa Public Schools, located in Mesa, Arizona. In this role he is building a strategic school staffing model where educators work on teams to deliver rigorous teaching and learning experiences.

Dr. Mendez has over 18 years of experience in education, and holds a doctorate of education and leadership and innovation from ASU, Arizona State University, in addition to a master's degree in education from ASU and another master's degree in athletic ad-

ministration from Concordia University Irvine. Welcome, Dr., Principal Greg, we are glad to have you here.

Thank everybody for being here. Members, I told you it was an all-star panel, and I am looking forward to their testimony. Under Committee Rules, I would ask that our witnesses, I have talked to most of you, it is 5 minutes because we like to talk, we limited everybody to 5 minutes, and so we have your written testimony, and if you want to submit more, we will take it.

Your talk today, your oral presentation will be limited to 5 minutes, and I do not have to tell you this, but I am supposed to tell you this, that we expect everybody, you have a responsibility to provide accurate information to the Subcommittee that we can make better choices with your accurate information.

Dr. Basile, you won the toss, so you will be going first. It is my pleasure to recognize you for 5 minutes. Welcome to the Committee.

**STATEMENT OF DR. CAROLE BASILE, DEAN, MARY LOU FULTON TEACHERS COLLEGE, ARIZONA STATE, TEMPE, ARIZONA**

Ms. BASILE. Thank you, Chairwoman Foxx, first let me thank you for making the trip to Arizona and taking the time to learn about our work. Chairman Bean, Ranking Member Bonamici, and esteemed members of the Subcommittee. Allow me to start with two assertions.

The first one may seem obvious, and the second one may seem at first contrarian, but bear with me. First, people are different. They look different. They have different tastes, and they learn in different ways. Second, the problem we are accustomed to calling teacher shortage is not really, or not only a teacher shortage.

We do not have a shortage of credentialed teachers. We have a shortage of credentialed teachers who want to do the job. The reason for this is connected to the fact that people are different. The default model of schooling one teacher, one classroom, treats all learners as identical.

It mistakes the statistics of an average learner for a real human being, and in assuming that all learners have the same educational needs, it assumes that all teachers need the same set of skills. Our teacher preparation programs have been designed essentially to mass produce identical educators.

This tells us a lot about why so many credentialed educators would rather do something else than teach. One, the one teacher, one classroom models ask all teachers to be all things to all people at all times. That is a tough ask of an experience teacher, let alone a recent graduate of a teacher prep program.

Second, most of the time the job looks the same on day 3,000 as it does on day one, and there are few pathways for advancement that offer professional growth. Three, there are two few paths to specialization in areas that would effectively address learner variance.

Teacher shortage is a downstream effect of a workforce design problem. It is bigger than pipeline building. A potential solution to that problem is an education workforce comprised of professionals with varying sets of skills, different areas of content knowledge,

and multiple modes of pedagogical expertise, and we need them to work in coordinated teams.

At Arizona State University we have a strategic staff initiative we call the Next Education Workforce. Through this initiative we partner with schools, and school systems, and inspire to, one, provide all students with deeper and personalized learning by building teams of educators, with distributed expertise, and empower educators by developing better ways to enter the profession, specialized and advanced.

In 2024–25 school year, we anticipate working with more than 150 schools across 40 school systems, and in 15 states to implement these team based models. This work will impact upwards of 25,000 students, and 1,000 educators, and more than 300 teams. This work has broad implications for teacher preparation.

Teacher preparation programs in schools need to work together to accomplish three things that are not currently doing well enough. One, make work count. The work teacher candidates perform in schools is work. Work should be compensated. Many teacher candidates work other jobs to support themselves, and in many cases their families, as they complete coursework and their professional experiences.

This is a major cause of stress and burnout. Right now, there are residencies, alternative certification pathways, and apprenticeship models that allow teacher candidates to be paid while they work toward certification. These are a start, but in every case, we need to get the professional experience right.

The second is to get the professional experience right. In addressing the problem of paying teacher candidates, programs often create another problem by asking teacher candidates to perform the roles of experienced teachers. They are not experienced teachers, and it is not reasonable to expect to retain people that are hired to perform tasks they are not prepared to do.

For their sake, and for the sake of the students they serve, teacher candidates should be given clearly defined responsibilities that allow them to learn in stages, gain competencies, and grow professionally. Put them on teams. Work with schools to create professional experiences that teacher candidates can perform successfully and serve identified learning needs in schools.

Our field, working with government at all levels, has no shortage of solutions to parts of the problem. While each of those solutions will measurably advance progress in addressing some part of the problem, they are not systemic solutions. ASU's model offers a systemic solution.

We can make teacher preparation programs affordable through scholarships, but that does not mean we can retain educators in the field. We can implement residencies and paid apprenticeships, and other ways of making work count, but that does not address the isolation, and the lack of professional advancement pathways inherent in one teacher, one classroom models.

We can also make it easier to become a teacher, but that does not guarantee the teacher retention or good learning incomes. If we have an ask of our government, it is this, support local innovations and workforce design in teacher preparation that make the profession both more accessible and more attractive. Reward school sys-

tems that manage their human capital in ways that lead to demonstrable improvement in learning outcomes.

Catalyze partnerships between State agencies and teacher preparation programs and school systems. The challenge in teacher preparation is not merely labor shortage, but a workforce design challenge. Thank you.

[The Statement of Ms. Basile follows:]

STATEMENT OF DR. CAROLE BASILE, DEAN, MARY LOU FULTON TEACHERS COLLEGE,  
ARIZON STATE, TEMPE, ARIZONA

Chairwoman Foxx, let me thank you for making the trip to ASU and taking the time to learn about our work.

Chairman Bean, Ranking Member Bonamici, Ranking Member Scott, and esteemed members of the subcommittee:

Allow me to start with two assertions. The first one may seem obvious. The second one may seem, at first, contrarian but bear with me.

First: people are different. They look different, have different tastes. They learn in different ways. Second: The problem we are accustomed to calling a teacher shortage is not really—or not only—a teacher shortage. We do not have a shortage of credentialed teachers. We have a shortage of credentialed teachers who want to do the job. The reason for this is connected to the fact that people are different.

The default model of schooling—one teacher, one classroom—treats all learners as identical. It mistakes the statistical abstraction of an average learner for a real human being. In assuming that all learners have the same educational needs, it assumes that all teachers need the same set of skills. Our teacher-preparation programs have been designed, essentially, to mass-produce identical educators.

This tells us a lot about why so many credentialed educators would rather do something else than teach.

1. The one-teacher, one-classroom model asks all teachers to be all things to all people at all times. That is a tough ask for an experienced teacher, let alone a recent graduate of a teacher-prep program.
2. Most of the time, the job looks the same on day 3,000 as it does on day one. There are few pathways of advancement that offer professional growth.
3. There are too few paths to specialization in areas that would effectively address learner variance.

Teacher shortage is a downstream effect of a workforce design problem. It is bigger than pipeline building.

A potential solution to that problem is an education workforce comprised of professionals with varying sets of skills, different areas of content knowledge, and multiple modes of pedagogical expertise. We need them to work in coordinated teams.

At Arizona State University we have strategic staffing initiative we call The Next Education Workforce.

Through this initiative we partner with schools and school systems and aspire to:

1. provide all students with deeper and personalized learning by building teams of educators with distributed expertise; and
2. empower educators by developing better ways to enter the profession, specialize and advance. In the 2024-25 school year, we anticipate working with more than 120 schools across 40 school systems in 15 states to implement team-based models. This work will impact upwards of 25,000 students and 1,000 educators on more than 300 teams.

This work has broad implications for teacher preparation.

Teacher-preparation programs and schools need to work together to accomplish three things they are not currently doing well enough.

1. Make work count.

The work teacher candidates perform in schools is work. Work should be compensated. Many teacher candidates work other jobs to support themselves and, in many cases, their families as they complete coursework and their professional experiences.

This is a major cause of stress and burnout.

Right now, there are residencies, alternative certification pathways, and apprenticeship models that allow teacher candidates to be paid while they work toward certification. These are a start but in every case we need to get the professional experience right.

2. Get professional experience right.

In addressing the problem of paying teacher candidates, programs often create another problem by asking teacher candidates to perform the roles of experienced teachers. They are not experienced teachers, and it is not reasonable to expect to retain people that are hired to perform tasks they are not prepared to do.

For their sake—and for the sake of the students they serve—teacher candidates should be given clearly defined responsibilities that allow them to learn in stages, gain competencies, and grow professionally.

3. Put them on teams:

Work with schools to create role-based professional experiences that teacher candidates can perform successfully—and that serve identified learning needs in schools.

Our field, working with government at all levels, has no shortage of solutions to parts of the problem. While each of those solutions will measurably advance progress in addressing some part of the problem, they are part of the solution and not the whole solution. ASU's model offers the whole solution.

We can make teacher-prep programs affordable through scholarships, but that does not mean we can retain educators in the field.

We can implement residencies and paid apprenticeships and other ways of making work count, but that does not address the isolation and lack of professional advancement pathways inherent in the one-teacher-one-classroom model.

We can make it easier to become a teacher, but that does not guarantee teacher retention or good learning outcomes.

If we have an ask of state and local government, it is this:

1. Support local innovations in workforce design and teacher-preparation that make the profession both more accessible and more attractive.
2. Reward school systems that manage their human capital in ways that lead to demonstrable improvement in learning outcomes for students and professional outcomes for educators.
3. Catalyze partnerships between State Education Agencies, teacher-prep programs and school systems to create new kinds of certification pathways for roles with meaningful professional support and coaching.

The challenge in teacher preparation is not merely labor shortage but a workforce design problem.

### Links for Further Review

Next Education Workforce Website: <https://workforce.education.asu.edu/>

Basile, C. G., Maddin, B. W., & Audrain, R. L. (2022). The next education workforce: How team-based staffing models can support equity and improve learning outcomes. Rowman & Littlefield. <https://www.amazon.com/Next-Education-Workforce-Carole-Basile/dp/1475867263>

American Enterprise Institute Report: This Initiative Seeks to Redesign How We Staff School <https://www.aei.org/op-eds/this-initiative-seeks-to-redesign-how-we-staff-schools/> (July 2024)

American Enterprise Institute Report: Next Education Workforce: <https://www.aei.org/research-products/report/the-next-education-workforce-team-based-staffing-models-can-make-schools-work-better-for-both-learners-and-educators/> (August 2022)

Center on Reinventing Public Education: Early evidence of improved educator outcomes in Next Education Workforce models <https://crpe.org/early-evidence-of-improved-educator-outcomes-in-next-education-workforce-models/> (May 2024)

Dean Carole Basile Blog: Teacher Retention Begins with Teacher Preparation: <https://education.asu.edu/the-next-normal/teacher-retention> (May 2023)

U.S. Department of Education Grant supports Next Education Workforce models in Arizona's largest School District <https://education.asu.edu/projects-and-impact/transforming-district%E2%80%99s-human-resources-strategy-benefit-both-earners-and>

Hechinger Report: <https://hechingerreport.org/in-one-giant-classroom-four-teachers-manage-135-kids-and-love-it/> (November 2022)

Survey of Teachers Working in Next Education Workforce models: <https://workforce.education.asu.edu/resource/results-from-the-year-one-survey-of-next-education-workforce-teachers>

ASU Thrive Magazine: ASU's Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College is helping school systems rethink the traditional classroom model (January 2024)

DC Journal: Innovative teaching models can solve teacher shortage (November 2023)

Hechinger Report: In one giant classroom, four teachers manage 135 kids—and love it (November 2022)

Kappan Magazine: Empowering educators through team-based staffing models (September 2022)

AZ Republic OpEd: “Arizona needs great teachers, not just warm bodies, in classrooms. Here’s how to get them” (July 2022)

EdWeek: “It’s Time to Rethink the ‘One Teacher, One Classroom’ Model” (July 2022)

Ed Surge: “Arizona Needs Teachers. Does the Answer Lie Beyond Recruitment?” (July 2022)

Highlights and Results of Next Education Workforce models

In the 2024–25 school year, we anticipate that the implementation of Next Education Workforce team-based models by schools and districts ASU partners will include more than 120 schools across 40 school systems in 15 states. The launch of team-based models will impact upwards of 25,000 students, support over 1,000 educators on 300+ teams.

In addition to Arizona, our work is happening in Arkansas, California, Colorado, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, North Carolina, Nevada, New York, Ohio, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia and Washington, D.C.

Results for Educators

- Are more satisfied (75% vs. 66%)
- Collaborate more (planning & implementation)
- Believe they have better teacher-student interactions
- Report that students are more likely to ask for support
- Request fewer substitutes (2 less/teacher)
- Are absent less frequently (1 fewer day/teacher)
- Feel more respected in their role as an educator

Results for Learners

- Observed higher levels of support and opportunities for collaboration
- Increase in 3rd grade reading growth (+1.5 months of growth)
- Increases in Algebra I passing rates

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Chairman BEAN. Well done, thank you, Dr. Basile. You gave us 6 seconds back, so thank you very much. Up next is Dr. Melba Spooner, welcome to the Committee, and you are recognized for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF DR. MELBA SPOONER, DEAN, REICH COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, APPALACHIAN STATE UNIVERSITY, BOONE, NORTH CAROLINA**

Ms. SPOONER. Thank you, Chairman Bean, Ranking Member Bonamici, Dr. Foxx, esteemed Committee members. Good morning and thank you. It is an honor and a pleasure to be here with you today. I would like to also extend a very special appreciation to Dr. Foxx, who we are so proud that you represent App State, and we appreciate all the support you have provided to educators, schools and classrooms, not only in North Carolina, but across the Nation.

I began my career in education as a teacher assistant and had opportunities to serve as the classroom teacher and Assistant Principal in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District, transitioning to a career in higher education. I appreciate the opportunity to share some insights into the enduring legacy of how we are preparing educators at App State.

That said, we are also constantly growing and changing how we do this important work of recruiting, retaining and supporting educators and schools across the country. We utilize research-based content and curriculum to prepare candidates for the classroom. For example, in recent years the examination of the teaching of reading has become more important. In response to the needs of the children, families and teachers in North Carolina, and beyond, we have engaged in an extensive curriculum redesign process.

Our perspective teachers are immersed in a curriculum aligned with the science of reading. Before they graduate, candidates are required to be proficient in literacy instruction. To ensure their full preparation, they are also required to complete extensive coursework and supervised clinical experiences in schools, and in classrooms.

To successfully recruit, prepare, graduate and support exemplary teaching professionals, we invest time in building partnerships with school district across the State. This allows us to provide a wide variety of experience for candidates and schools with students who are representative of North Carolina's population.

A key component of our educator prep program is an emphasis on classroom management. Perspective teachers are involved in classroom instruction and clinical experiences that allow them to observe, learn and practice a variety of techniques. They graduate with the necessary expertise in planning, instruction and utilizing classroom management skills tailored to the developmental and behavioral needs of the students in their classrooms.

Graduates do not just leave the university with a diploma, they leave ready for the workforce, with the necessary skills to take on one of the hardest, and most rewarding careers that exist today. Additionally, all perspective teachers are required to engage in a series of professional development activities before completing their programs of study.

This requirement enhances their classroom learning, and clinical experiences, while ensuring they understand the value and commitment to lifelong learning, and continuous professional development. The pre-graduation requirements and post-graduation support that are provided have real significance nationwide.

I am proud to share that for the eighth consecutive year App State has led the Nation in the number of alumni who hold the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Credentialed, currently 2,321 alumni have earned this outstanding credential. In our rural area of Northwestern North Carolina, there is, just as there is nationwide, a workforce deficit in high needs areas, such as special education and STEM education.

Many schools and districts in the region face limitations and challenges as they work to meet the needs of their students. App State provides critical assistance, not only by graduating highly prepared and proficient teachers, but also by partnering with K-2 school district, and community colleges to develop initiatives and alternate pathways to fill workforce gaps, making teacher preparation programs more flexible, accessible and affordable is key to recruiting and retaining great teachers.

We are constantly addressing the needs of the market, adapting and refining recruitment and retention efforts, and ensuring we offer the flexibility students need to graduate on time, and with some of the lowest college debt in the Nation. We highly regard our responsibility to develop programs that address educators' ongoing educational needs.

Furthermore, we work to address the market demand for serving adult learners. Those who begin their education careers at community colleges, as well as those who enter the profession through an

alternative pathway. I am immensely proud to be part of that space, continuing the legacy of preparing extraordinary teachers.

Of course, none of our accomplishments would be possible without the support from the North Carolina General Assembly, and the USE Board of Governors, and I am grateful to our State Legislators and the taxpayers of North Carolina, who helped to ensure that the USE system remains the economic engine of our workforce and its exemplar for the Nation.

Thank you for holding the hearing with us today, and for your commitment to supporting current teachers, and educators of tomorrow. I appreciate the discussion and look forward to your questions. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Spooner follows:]

STATEMENT OF DR. MELBA SPOONER, DEAN, REICH COLLEGE OF EDUCATION,  
APPALACHIAN STATE UNIVERSITY, BOONE, NORTH CAROLINA

Chairman Bean, Ranking Member Bonamici, esteemed committee members . . . It is an honor and a pleasure to be with you all today, and I certainly appreciate the opportunity to share the great work being done at Appalachian State University and in colleges of education as we recruit, retain, and equip educators to make meaningful contributions both inside and outside of the classroom.

I would also like to extend a special appreciation to Dr. Virginia Foxx. We are so proud to have you represent App State, and we appreciate all the support you have provided to educators, schools, and classrooms not only in North Carolina, but across the nation.

My name is Dr. Melba Spooner, and I have the honor of serving as the dean of Appalachian State University's Reich College of Education since 2016. I began my career in education as a teacher assistant and had opportunities to serve as a classroom teacher and assistant principal in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District in North Carolina. I transitioned to a career in higher education at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, serving in various roles including faculty member; assistant dean; chair of the Department of Middle, Secondary, and K-12 Education; and senior associate dean of the Cato College of Education.

As a nationwide leader in professional education accreditation efforts, I have served in leadership capacities at the national and state levels on issues related to accreditation and policy. I am active and engaged across the state in matters of policy and education initiatives. I provided service on the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Commission and am currently serving a second term on the North Carolina Principal Fellows Commission. In 2019, I also served on the State Board of Education Pre-K-12 Literacy Instruction and Teacher Preparation Task Force.

It is important to note, at least for me, as I stand before you, how very grateful I am for this moment. As a product of the P-12 public education system and the public university system, I am proud to say that I am a North Carolina public school educator.

I appreciate the opportunity to share some insights into the enduring legacy of how we are preparing educators at App State. That said, we are also constantly growing and changing how we do this important work of recruiting, retaining, and supporting educators and schools across the country.

As a premier public institution, Appalachian State University prepares students to lead purposeful lives. App State is one of 17 campuses in the University of North Carolina System, with a national reputation for innovative teaching and opening access to high-quality, affordable education for all. The university enrolls more than 21,000 students, has a low student-to-faculty ratio, and offers more than 150 undergraduate and 80 graduate majors at its Boone and Hickory campuses and through App State Online.

For one hundred and twenty-five years, our university has been focused on ensuring that anyone who had the desire to learn, and the willingness to work hard, could have access to a great education. Access, student success, and a high-quality education have been our key pillars since our founders created a bold and ambitious vision for the future of our region, and we remain focused on these founding principles today.

Preparing quality educators was App State's founding mission since its inception as a teacher's college and it is still in our DNA today. Our graduates become leaders in their fields and in their communities, inspiring the next generation of educators.

One-third of App State students are from rural areas, and one-third are first-generation college students. A quarter of them graduate with absolutely no college debt. Given the regional and statewide needs within rural settings, high-need areas, and underrepresented populations, App State graduates are primed to serve schools throughout the region, state, and nation.

With more than 10,000 graduates working in over 21 hundred schools in North Carolina, the influence of App State's educator preparation program is strong in every corner of the state. App State graduates work in nearly every one of North Carolina's 100 counties. We are proud that most of our alumni stay in North Carolina, contributing to their communities through their leadership and service well after graduation.

App State is first and foremost attentive to the needs of the state in terms of the need for great teachers. Investing in the work and preparation of teachers is what we do, and we know that it takes strong and rigorous academic programming, and it takes an intentional focus on all aspects of what educators do for their growth and development as teachers and leaders. Let me share just a few key highlights about the university and things that set us apart so that you might have a better understanding of the work that we do . . . have done . . . and will continue to do:

We utilize research-based content and curriculum to prepare candidates for the classroom. Coursework and aligned field experiences focus on the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards of Leadership, Content Knowledge, Classroom Environment, Facilitation of Learning, and Reflection. Candidates learn and apply these standards through a rigorous series of Professional Education courses. There are also multiple opportunities to develop and implement instructional practices while maintaining a safe and orderly environment, which translates into classroom management of time and behavior.

Metrics are used to evaluate candidate effectiveness. These metrics include multiple assessment points and instruments, which are ultimately compared to graduate and employer survey data, as well as state effectiveness measures. Results from these intensive assessment protocols are used to set program goals for annual program planning and continuous improvement.

In recent years, and more than ever, the examination of the teaching of reading has become more and more important. App State's teacher education students are immersed in a curriculum that is aligned with the Science of Reading, and before they graduate, they are required to be proficient in teaching literacy. To ensure their full preparation, they are required to complete extensive coursework with authentic field experiences. The fidelity of instruction of the Science of Reading is continuously reviewed and evaluated by a Literacy Framework Team consisting of literacy faculty and college leadership.

Recently, App State was selected as one of five institutions across the UNC System to participate in a Literacy Innovation Leaders initiative, which aligned educator preparation, teacher professional development, and continuing education requirements with the Science of Reading. In this endeavor, students in the elementary and special education preparation programs were selected to participate as literacy scholars. They completed the state-adopted Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling program, participated in literacy-focused professional development alongside practicing in-service educators, participated in a mentoring program, and informed the college's redesign of literacy coursework and field experiences. These Literacy Innovation Leaders served as a model for the rest of the state.

Additionally, literacy education faculty also completed the Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling program, demonstrating how we engage together to make the "student to educator" transition more seamless. Participation in this program has also greatly informed our curriculum.

Appalachian State teacher candidates are expected to be classroom and building-level leaders in the effective and ethical use of digital technologies. This is emphasized not only in coursework but in a wide range of opportunities for co-curricular professional development, including the inclusion of micro-credentials specific to digital learning. The college is engaged with other educator preparation programs at the national level on strategies to help candidates utilize technologies to these ends.

Because we know that it is important to have a deep understanding of what the "real world" of teaching is all about, we provide intentional and authentic experiences that we know candidates will encounter when going into their schools and classrooms.

To successfully recruit, prepare, graduate and support exemplary teaching professionals, we invest time in building partnerships and collaborations with public schools across the entire state we are so proud to serve. App State invests in partnerships with 71 public school units across North Carolina. This allows us to pro-

vide a wide variety of experiences for candidates in schools with student populations that are representative of the citizens of North Carolina.

Teacher candidates have multiple field experiences throughout their program. This continuum ensures candidates have these experiences early and often. Throughout their early field experiences, approximately 1,000 candidates are engaged in North Carolina public schools each semester.

An important aspect of the curriculum and associated field experiences to note is the inclusion of a focus on classroom management throughout the educator preparation program. During the course of the candidates' preparation to become an educator, they are heavily involved in classroom instruction and field experiences that allow them to observe, learn, and practice a variety of classroom management techniques. Each program has a specific focus on selecting, planning, and utilizing materials, strategies, classroom management techniques, and experiences based on the developmental and behavioral needs of students.

Additionally, we require all of our teacher education students to complete a series of 20 professional development activities, each building on the one prior to it. This requirement not only enhances their classroom learning and field experiences, it also ensures our students understand the value and commitment to lifelong learning and continuous professional development.

The pre-graduation requirements and post-graduation support we provide have real significance nationwide. I am proud to report that, for the eighth consecutive year, App State leads the nation in the number of alumni who hold National Board for Professional Teaching Standards credentials. Currently, 2,321 App State alumni nationwide have earned this outstanding credential, which is the most respected professional certification available in education.

By providing these authentic experiences and professional development opportunities, our candidates are not just sitting in the classroom and learning about teaching; they are going out and practicing it. As one of our alums noted, "Why Appalachian? Because it provides rich academic experiences and preparation for all education majors early on in our programs."

At App State, we understand that making teacher preparation programs more flexible, accessible, and affordable is key to recruiting and retaining great teachers for North Carolina and beyond.

Scholar programs, like the North Carolina Teaching Fellows and App State's Appalachian Community of Education Scholars, are another facet of our curriculum. Not only do these programs help offset the financial burden for students, they also help recruit educators in high-need and high-demand areas.

The North Carolina Teaching Fellows program invests in North Carolina students, teachers, and communities by providing affordable and rigorous professional development alongside a teacher preparation program. This program is known for producing and supporting high-quality teacher leaders without student debt, which we all know is an epidemic across our country and a massive concern among families across the state.

App State has more than 150,000 alumni nationwide. Seventy-five percent of them live in and contribute to North Carolina's economy. Our most recent economic impact study shows that App State contributed more than two point-two billion dollars to the statewide economy, with \$573 million of that directly benefiting the economies of Watauga, Ashe, Avery, Caldwell and Wilkes counties. We continue to increase access to higher education by offering academic programs through traditional, hybrid and online delivery modes to meet the needs of today's learners. We have aligned our programs with the needs and critical workforce shortages of Western North Carolina with the creation of multiple pathways to enter the profession.

Across the nation, there is a workforce deficit in the high-needs areas of special education and STEM education, and northwest North Carolina is no exception. The geographic limitations of the region in which App State sits have prompted schools and districts to regularly request STEM and special education graduates from App State; further, the deficit has resulted in a myriad of initiatives and articulations to fill the workforce gaps. The college collaborates with the Foundation for Public School Children's Teacher Cadet Program and the state's Department of Public Instruction's Teaching as a Profession Career and Technical Education Program to support partners in developing programs to fill the persistent teacher shortage throughout the state and region. Appalachian State has trained and partnered with almost 30 Teacher Cadet instructors in northwest North Carolina, and the college provides mentors, college access resources, and hosts Future Educator Days.

We are constantly examining our recruitment efforts and ways of retaining individuals in our respective programs, as well as offering flexible, alternative (and traditional) pathways to meet the needs of individuals who are preparing to be educators and to keep them in the "pipeline" and progressing toward a degree and/or

teaching credential. We have and continue to develop programs to address educators' continuing education needs and non-traditional enrollment pathways, including partnerships with community colleges and P-12 school districts.

We are constantly responding to the needs of the market, adapting and refining our recruitment and retention efforts and ensuring we offer our students the flexibility they need to graduate on time, with some of the lowest college debt in the nation. One-third of App State students are from rural areas, and one-third are first-generation college students. A quarter of them graduate with absolutely no college debt.

An example of this is a collaborative partnership with Caldwell County Schools and Caldwell Community College as part of the North Carolina Educator Pipeline Collaborative. The four main goals of the Collaborative are to (1) Identify and understand the work of successful partnerships and programs; (2) Develop a framework for effective teacher preparation partnerships across K-12, higher education, and workforce development that work to recruit, prepare, support and retain a diverse, high-quality educator pipeline; (3) Support a cohort of teacher preparation partnerships in developing programs that meet their context and community needs; and (4) Share findings and recommendations with school districts, institutions of higher education, and state leaders to promote best practices and advocate for policies and programs that will have a lasting impact on the teacher pipeline.

This initiative can help to remove barriers and enhance and extend efforts to recruit, prepare, and retain highly qualified teachers. Additionally, they incentivize and support candidates to take advantage of the Associates Degree in Teacher Preparation at the community college and transfer to a four-year institution to complete their bachelor's degree with an initial teacher license credential. Further collaborations with districts and community colleges to develop similar pathways are ongoing.

Through the Aspire Appalachian co-admission program, we provide a seamless pathway for students enrolled at partner community colleges to leverage their associate's degrees into bachelor's degrees at App State, receiving dedicated academic and financial aid advising assistance from both their community college and App State. We continue expanding this program and are on track to have agreements in place with nearly 30 community colleges by the end of this year.

Also, College Access Partnerships, or CAP, enhances relationships with rural schools, including recruitment efforts and engagement with diverse and underserved communities. CAP is made up of several large federal and private grant programs which include: GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs), Upward Bound, Young Eisner Scholars, College Advising Corps, and Empowering Teacher Learning. Its core mission is to build strategic partnerships to strengthen local communities through college access and success. The support that CAP and the college's Public School Partnerships provide to western North Carolina works to reduce barriers and access to higher education. Thus, solidifying a pathway for future educators.

Educator preparation programs are working diligently to respond to the recruitment and replacement needs of schools by increasing opportunities for non-traditional candidates through residency licensure and graduate certificate programs. For example, we offer seven programs for graduate certificate and residency licensure candidates that lead to an initial license, which include STEM areas, special education, and elementary education.

Recently, the college expanded its undergraduate program at the new App State at Hickory campus to include an initial licensure program in elementary education. This will provide opportunities for first-year and transfer teacher education candidates. With six community college campuses within one hour of the Hickory campus, transfers in that region will have greater options to complete their bachelor's degrees and initial teaching license.

Partnerships and collaboration are imperative in recruiting and ultimately supporting and graduating strong teachers to engage in the teaching and learning processes in classrooms. A very strong focal point and aspect of teacher development and support at App State is the intentionality of our partnerships at many levels and with multiple constituents—we cannot and do not just stay on the mountain.

Candidates in educator preparation programs have the option to return to their home district in which there are MOUs for student teaching, allowing them to give back to their local communities. This also supports district partners' recruitment efforts, including "grow your own" initiatives.

In 2016, the North Carolina General Assembly passed a law requiring the UNC Board of Governors to establish laboratory schools aimed at improving student performance in low-performing schools and to provide demonstration sites for the preparation of future teachers and school administrators.

Universities within the UNC System that operate a laboratory school partner directly with local school districts to promote evidence-based teaching and school leadership, while offering real-world experience to the next generation of teachers and principals. UNC System Laboratory Schools serve every part of the UNC System mission—teaching, research, and public service.

Currently, at App State, we are developing an apprenticeship program at the university's laboratory school, which will attract and support non-traditional students to the profession. By targeting transfer students from community colleges who have completed an associate's degree in Teacher Education, we will provide the opportunity for them to stay in their local communities to finish their bachelor's degree. The paid apprenticeship program will provide hands-on experience to candidates in real classroom settings at the laboratory school. Apprentices will work alongside experienced educators to observe, assist, and gradually take on increasing responsibilities in teaching all while completing teacher preparation coursework. The goal is to provide flexible and accessible opportunities for transfer and non-traditional students.

Equally important is leading the way to be innovators in reimagining education. One example in which we are doing this is through the work that is happening at the laboratory school, which is operated by App State. Our school, which is a public kindergarten through fifth-grade elementary school, has implemented a strategic staffing model that is reimagining the roles and responsibilities of educators. Moving away from the one-teacher, one-classroom model, the lab school is challenging the status quo and rethinking what school can and should look like for students and teachers. This has included restructuring teaching positions with a focus on workforce design and moving to a model that embraces co-teaching and team-based, distributed expertise.

We have also redesigned the school's master schedule to protect and increase the amount of time for instructional blocks. This led the lab school to implement a four-day instructional week. Teachers and students report to school five days a week, but each Friday is an Enrichment Day for students. Students are engaged in tutoring, interventions, and personalized and exploration-based learning to support their academic needs and growth. They also attend clubs and choice activities allowing them to explore their curiosities and interests. The Enrichment Days are facilitated by App State and local community members. Teachers do not have instructional responsibilities on the Enrichment Days, but they are heavily engaged inco-planning, analyzing student learning data, and their own professional learning and growth.

The laboratory schools are places where we can imagine possibilities and turn them into realities both in terms of curriculum development and enhancement for teacher education preparation and for practicing teachers and children. But we must not keep it to ourselves or limit it to just our laboratory school students and educators. We are in the process of establishing a Center for Re-Imagining Education. The work of this office will initially focus on scaling and replicating the innovative work that is currently happening in the App State laboratory school. This is hard work. We are asking teachers and school leaders to fundamentally think differently about what teaching and school should look like. This work is necessary if we want to meet the needs of today's students and their families. Serving as an incubator for making changes in schools and educator preparation programs alike, the Office for Reimagining Education will add value by fostering a culture of innovation, empowering educators, enhancing student learning experiences, and contributing to the overall advancement of education in a rapidly changing world. Laboratory schools inform the work of our educator preparation programs, and our educator preparation programs inform the work that is happening in laboratory schools. As we reimagine schools, we are also reimagining how we prepare future teachers and administrators at App State.

Recruiting is important. Equally important is retaining teachers. This is accomplished through supporting individuals throughout their programs of study as well as upon their completion as they enter the classroom as beginning teachers. As you know, supporting and engaging with new and beginning teachers is essential. It is important to make the transition from pre-service to in-service as seamless as possible. An example of this is the New Teacher Support Program, which provides coaching and professional development for beginning teachers in their first three years. The goal of the program is to improve beginning teacher effectiveness and promote teacher retention, both of which contribute to student achievement.

Through the work that has been described from the examples shared with you today, you can see App State is intentionally focused on eliminating barriers to preparing highly qualified and effective educators.

From its start as a regional teacher's college to its present-day status as one of North Carolina and the nation's leading teacher education programs, App State is

committed to recruiting, preparing, supporting, and placing highly qualified teachers in schools.

Our alumni embody the spirit of determination. They strive to make every classroom not just better—but the best it can be for the students they teach and work with each day.

As one alum noted, “The Reich College of Education supported my academic growth and development as a pre-service teacher while nurturing a passion for teacher leadership through the plethora of student engagement opportunities. They provide the infrastructure for more than student success, but also for teacher success, which is the epitome of what a teacher preparation program should do.”

As Dean of App State’s College of Education, I am immensely proud to be part of continuing App State’s legacy of preparing extraordinary teachers. Of course, none of our accomplishments would be possible without the support we receive from the North Carolina General Assembly and UNC System Board of Governors. I am grateful to our state legislators and the taxpayers of North Carolina who help ensure that the UNC System remains the crown jewel of our state, the economic engine of our workforce, and an exemplar for the nation.

Thank you so much for allowing me to share with you today all the great work being done at App State (and specifically how to enhance and increase the number of teachers in today’s schools and classrooms) as we prepare tomorrow’s education leaders to make meaningful contributions inside and outside the classroom. Thank you!

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Chairman BEAN. Dr. Spooner, you did great, thank you so much, and I appreciate the insight. Mr. El-Mekki, thank you so much. You are recognized. Welcome to the Committee.

**STATEMENT OF MR. SHARIF EL-MEKKI, CEO, CENTER FOR BLACK EDUCATOR DEVELOPMENT, ELKINS PARK, PENNSYLVANIA**

Mr. EL-MEKKI. Thank you so much, Chairman Bean, Ranking Member Hayes, and esteemed members of the Committee on Education and the Workforce. Thank you for the opportunity to address you on the critical need to increase educator diversity to better serve all students.

My name is Sharif El-Mekki, I am the Founder and CEO of the Center for Black Educator Development, dedicated to rebuilding the national black teacher pipeline. As an educator and a principal, I realized that many students rarely encounter teachers who look like them. This disparity is a national crisis.

Research consistently shows that all students benefit from a diverse teaching workforce. Teachers of color bring unique perspectives that enrich learning environment serve as role models, reduce stereotypes, and foster cross-culture understanding.

For students of color, having teachers who share their backgrounds leads to improved student performance, higher graduation rates, and increased college enrollment.

Studies show that black students who have one black teacher by third grade are 13 percent more likely to enroll in college, and if they have 2, that spikes up to 32 percent. For white students, exposure to diverse educators prepares them for a multi-cultural society and it enhances problem-solving and critical-thinking skills.

Despite black students making up about 15 percent of the student population, black teachers comprise only about 7 percent of the teaching workforce. This gap reflects systemic barriers that prevent black individuals from entering and remaining in the profession. Students with disabilities from marginalized communities face compounded challenges.

Diverse educators are more likely to implement inclusive practices, and advocate for all students, fulfilling the promises of the Individuals with the Disabilities Education Act, IDEA, and unfortunately, there is a significant shortage of special education teachers exacerbating disparities for students with disabilities.

Several barriers hinder the recruitment and retention of diverse educators, the COVID-19 pandemic has intensified teacher shortages, enrollment in teacher preparation programs have dropped significantly, disproportionately affecting educators of color in high need areas like special ed.

The high cost of teacher preparation programs and unpaid student teaching, disproportionately impacts candidates from low-income communities. Lack of mentorship, professional development, and leadership pathways leads to higher attrition rates amongst educators of color.

At the Center for Black Educator Development, we introduce teaching as a viable and esteemed career path early, through high school academies, pre-apprenticeship programs, and the We Need Black Teachers Campaign.

We develop mentorship programs, offer professional development, and ensure educator programs equip teachers to support students with disabilities effectively.

We advocate for scholarships, stipends and access to loan forgiveness programs to alleviate financial burdens, and importantly, we push for paid training opportunities, understanding that unpaid periods can be prohibitive for individuals from low-income backgrounds.

Allow me to share the story of Amir Williams, a 2024 graduate who participated in our programs, both in high school and in college. Upon graduation, he was hired to teach at his alma mater. As one of only two black men in his teacher prep program, our support provided him with the community, network and skills necessary for him to be successful.

His journey, and many others, exemplifies how supportive rigorous pathways can lead to successful outcomes without lowering professional standards.

We also host the annual Black Men in Education convening, the largest gathering of black male educators in the country, bringing together over 1,000 educators for professional development workshops, discussions and networking.

I extend an invitation for each of you to attend our upcoming event in November. Educator diversity is essential for educational equity and excellence. By bringing diverse voices into our classrooms, we enrich the learning environment for all students, especially those from marginalized communities, and students with disabilities.

I urge this Committee to support Federal programs like the Augustus F. Hawkins Centers of Excellence, that directly address educator diversity.

Invest in innovative, rigorous, alternative pathways that offer accessible and paid routes into teaching, and systems that improve the working conditions once they get into the schools, and support organizations and coalitions like the Women and Teachers of Color, and National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

Enhanced IDEA implementation by preparing educators to meet the needs of students with disabilities, and addressing shortages in special education teachers, and address financial barriers by providing financial support during training periods, loan forgiveness and scholarships.

Together, we can build an education system that reflects our country's rich diversity and upholds the promise of equal opportunity for every child. Thank you for your time and dedication to this critical issue. I look forward to your questions.

[The Statement of Mr. El-Mekki follows:]

STATEMENT OF DR. MR. SHARIF EL-MEKKI, CEO, CENTER FOR BLACK EDUCATOR DEVELOPMENT, ELKINS PARK, PENNSYLVANIA

### **Introduction**

Chairwoman Foxx, Ranking Member Bobby Scott, and esteemed members of the Committee on Education and the Workforce:

Thank you for the opportunity to address you today on a matter that is pivotal to the future of education in our nation—the imperative of increasing educator diversity to better serve all students. Imagine a young student stepping into a classroom and seeing a teacher who not only understands their cultural background but also reflects their own aspirations—a mentor who can guide them through shared experiences. This is the transformative power of educator diversity. My name is Sharif El-Mekki. I have more than 25 years of experience as an educator and advocate, I serve as the founder and CEO of the Center for Black Educator Development. Our mission is to rebuild the national Black teacher pipeline and, more broadly, to enhance educator diversity across the country.

### **The Critical Need for Educator Diversity**

I was lucky enough to have dozens of teachers of color throughout my PK–12th grade education. However, once I became a teacher, the parents of my students often told me I was the only Black man to ever teach their children. Later, as a principal, I realized that the lack of teacher applicants of color was not just a problem in Philadelphia, where I was a principal for 16 years, it was a national crisis. Research has consistently demonstrated that all students benefit from a diverse teaching workforce. Teachers of color bring unique perspectives, experiences, and cultural understandings that enrich the learning environment for all students. They serve as role models, reduce stereotypes, and foster cross-cultural understanding.

For students of color, having teachers who share their racial or ethnic background can lead to improved academic performance, higher graduation rates, and increased college enrollment. Research shows that students of color who have at least one teacher of color may perform better on standardized tests and are less likely to face disciplinary actions. For white students, exposure to diverse educators helps prepare them for a multicultural society and global workforce. Studies also indicate that white students show improved problem-solving, critical thinking, and creativity when they have diverse teachers.

At the Center for Black Educator Development, we are deeply focused on the need to increase the number of Black teachers in this country.

Specifically, studies have shown that Black students benefit significantly from having Black teachers. Black students who have even one Black teacher by third grade are 13% more likely to enroll in college. With two Black teachers, that likelihood increases to 32%. Black teachers serve as role models, mentors, and advocates who understand the cultural and social contexts of their students, fostering a sense of belonging and boosting academic achievement.

However, despite Black students comprising approximately 15% of the student population, Black teachers make up only about 7% of the teaching workforce. This disparity is not just a statistical concern but a reflection of systemic barriers that prevent Black individuals from entering and remaining in the teaching profession.

### **Impact on Students with Disabilities**

It is also crucial to recognize the intersectionality of race, ethnicity, and disability. Students with disabilities, particularly those from marginalized communities, face compounded challenges in accessing quality education. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) ensures that students with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education tailored to their individual needs.

Educator diversity plays a vital role in fulfilling the promises of IDEA. Diverse teachers are more likely to implement inclusive practices and advocate for the needs of all students. They bring cultural competencies that can enhance the educational experiences of students with disabilities, ensuring they receive equitable support and opportunities. Conversely, Black students with Black teachers are less likely to be erroneously referred to receive special education services.

Moreover, there is a significant shortage of special education teachers, particularly among educators of color. According to recent studies, special education teachers of color are leaving the classroom at higher rates due to systemic challenges and a lack of support. This shortage exacerbates the disparities faced by students with disabilities in marginalized communities, highlighting the urgent need to address this issue.

### **Challenges in Building a Diverse Educator Workforce**

Despite the clear benefits, significant barriers hinder the recruitment and retention of diverse educators. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated teacher shortages across the nation.

According to the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE), enrollment in teacher preparation programs dropped by an additional 20% since 2020. This decline disproportionately affects educators of color and those in high-need areas like special education.

Special education faces one of the highest teacher shortage areas. The U.S. Department of Education reported a 17% vacancy rate in special education teaching positions in 2022.

Teachers of color in special education are leaving the classroom at higher rates due to systemic challenges and lack of support.

The high cost of teacher preparation programs and certification exams disproportionately affects candidates from low-income communities. Teacher candidates are often required to complete unpaid student teaching experiences, which can last several months. For many, the inability to earn an income during this period creates an insurmountable barrier to entering the profession.

Teacher candidates are often required to complete extensive unpaid student teaching assignments, sometimes lasting up to a year. For individuals from lower-income backgrounds, this loss of income is a significant barrier. A study by the Economic Policy Institute found that unpaid training periods contribute to the lack of diversity in the teaching profession.

Many institutions express a commitment to diversity but lack effective strategies to attract candidates from underrepresented backgrounds. Recruitment efforts often fail to reach potential educators of color and those interested in special education.

Once in the profession, educators of color frequently encounter environments lacking in mentorship, professional development, and pathways to leadership positions. This lack of support contributes to higher attrition rates.

### **Alternative Pathways to the Teaching Profession**

In towns and cities across the nation, schools face the pressing challenge of teacher shortages and a lack of diversity among educators. To address these issues, communities are turning to innovative, alternative pathways to bring passionate, qualified individuals into the classroom—pathways that maintain rigor and competitiveness without lowering the threshold of becoming an educator.

Imagine a dedicated paraprofessional who has spent years assisting in classrooms, building relationships with students, and understanding the unique needs of their community. Programs like the collaboration between College UnBound and the Equity Institute are turning this scenario into reality by providing meaningful support for teaching assistants to earn their bachelor's degrees. This initiative has seen a staggering 400% increase in applications and boasts a 97% retention rate for participants. Such success stories highlight how investing in local talent not only fills teaching positions but also enriches schools with educators who are deeply rooted in the communities they serve.

Similarly, the National Center for Grow Your Own is making significant strides by offering technical assistance to state and local education agencies interested in launching "Grow Your Own" (GYO) programs in partnership with educator preparation providers. These programs tackle staff shortages head-on and build long-term pipelines for future teachers and school leaders. By removing financial barriers and providing paid training opportunities, GYO programs attract aspiring educators who might otherwise be unable to pursue this career path, leading to higher retention rates and increased diversity among educators.

Residents at the Alder Graduate School of Education dive into immersive, hands-on training by working directly in the schools where they will eventually teach.

Guided by experienced mentors, these residents blend theory with practice, preparing them to become effective educators from day one. The program's impact is evident, with 90% of residents expressing strong positive evaluations of their experience.

Another inspiring example is the City Teaching Alliance, where teacher residents earn a master's degree from a higher education partner, receive dual certification, and benefit from personalized support. Importantly, these programs maintain high standards of rigor and competitiveness, ensuring that the quality of education is upheld. The results speak volumes: 91% of participants who complete the program continue to teach, and 90% report that the program equipped them with the necessary skills to be effective in the classroom.

On a federal level, initiatives like the Augustus F. Hawkins Centers of Excellence Program play a crucial role in advancing educator diversity. By providing grants to strengthen teacher preparation programs at Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs), the Hawkins Program ensures that educators of color are well-prepared to meet the demands of today's classrooms. Continuing to fund and support these programs is essential for cultivating a teaching workforce that reflects the rich diversity of our student populations.

By embracing these alternative pathways, which are both rigorous and accessible, we are not only addressing immediate challenges but also laying the foundation for a more inclusive and effective educational system. It is a collective effort that recognizes and nurtures talent from within our communities, ensuring that every classroom is led by an educator who is both highly qualified and deeply connected to the students they teach.

#### **What the Center for Black Educator Development Is Doing**

Of course, I would be remiss if I did not talk about what we are doing at the Center for Black Educator Development. Simply put, we are driving revolutionary approaches to rebuild the educator pipeline and increase diversity within the teaching profession.

We introduce teaching as a viable and esteemed career path to students of all backgrounds early in their educational journeys. Through high school teaching academies, learning communities, and initiatives like our Teaching Academy pre-apprenticeship programming and our national #WeNeedBlackTeachers campaign, we ignite interest and provide foundational knowledge about the teaching profession. By engaging students from a young age, we cultivate a passion for education and empower them to envision themselves as future educators.

We develop mentorship programs that connect new educators with experienced mentors who share similar backgrounds or experiences. Our professional development offerings focus on leadership skills, cultural competency, and inclusive practices. By fostering supportive relationships and a community of practice, we enhance retention and career advancement for educators of color.

We ensure that our educator preparation programs equip all teachers with the skills to support students with disabilities effectively. Our training emphasizes inclusive practices and collaboration with special education professionals. By preparing educators to meet the diverse needs of all students, we uphold the principles of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and promote educational equity.

Recognizing the financial barriers that often deter candidates from underrepresented groups, we advocate for scholarships, stipends, and access to loan forgiveness programs. Through partnerships with educational institutions and philanthropic organizations, we provide financial support to alleviate economic burdens, making the teaching profession more accessible to diverse candidates. Importantly, we also advocate for paid training opportunities for teacher candidates, understanding that unpaid training periods can be prohibitive for individuals from lower-income backgrounds.

We actively advocate for policies that promote educator diversity and support programs like the Augustus F. Hawkins Centers of Excellence. Through collaboration with policymakers, educational leaders, and community stakeholders, we seek legislative action that provides the necessary resources and framework for systemic change. Our advocacy efforts aim to create sustainable impact at local, state, and federal levels.

#### **The Story of Imere Williams**

Allow me to illustrate the impact of our work with the story of Imere Williams, a 2024 graduate of West Chester University. Imere participated in our paid teacher

pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs during high school and throughout his college years. Upon graduation, he was hired to teach at his alma mater.

For students like Imere—one of only two Black men in his teacher preparation program—our ongoing engagement provided support and a network of other young Black men aspiring to lead their own classrooms. He navigated the challenges of a less diverse teacher college with the backing of a community that understood his experiences. Our programs offered him early exposure, clinical experiences, and financial support that encouraged him to join the critical profession of teaching. Imere’s journey exemplifies how alternative pathways that are rigorous and supportive can lead to successful outcomes without lowering the standards of the profession. He is one of dozens of Black youths who, through our high school and college programming, received formal invitations to join this critical profession. Organizations like ours play a critical role in this ecosystem by not only rebuilding a Black Teacher Pipeline but also strengthening it and addressing its many leaks.

### **Black Men in Education Convening**

I also want to mention that we host the largest gathering of Black educators in the country annually—the Black Men in Education Convening (#BMEC2024). The event occurs in November each year and brings together more than 1,000 Black educators from across the country for workshops, panel discussions, and networking opportunities in Philadelphia. This conference, a platform for celebrating achievements, highlights best practices, and offers space for social-emotional well-being, reinforcing the importance of Black male educators in the teaching profession.

I would be delighted to formally invite each of you to attend our upcoming event on [insert dates], at [location]. Your presence would underscore the importance of this issue and provide an opportunity to engage directly with educators who are making a difference in classrooms across the nation. We will send additional information following this testimony.

### **Conclusion**

The pursuit of educator diversity is not merely a matter of representation; it is a critical component of educational equity and excellence. By bringing a multitude of voices and experiences into our classrooms, we enrich the learning environment for all students—especially those from marginalized communities and students with disabilities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified the challenges we face, leading to increased teacher shortages, particularly in special education. Financial barriers, such as unpaid training periods, continue to deter talented individuals from entering the profession. Through intentional efforts and innovative programs that maintain high standards, we can overcome these obstacles.

Imere’s story is a testament to what can be achieved when systemic barriers are dismantled and supportive pathways into the teaching profession are established. Organizations like ours play a vital role in rebuilding and strengthening the Black Teacher Pipeline, addressing leaks that often deter talented individuals from pursuing careers in education.

### **I urge the Committee to take decisive action by:**

- **Supporting Federal Programs:** Expand funding and support for initiatives like the Augustus F. Hawkins Centers of Excellence that directly address educator diversity.
- **Investing in Alternative Pathways:** Encourage the development of innovative programs that offer flexible, accessible, and paid routes into teaching, ensuring they remain rigorous and competitive without lowering professional standards.
- **Enhancing IDEA Implementation:** Ensure that the principles of IDEA are fully realized by preparing educators to meet the needs of students with disabilities and addressing the acute shortages in special education teachers.
- **Addressing Financial Barriers:** Implement policies that provide financial support for teacher candidates, including stipends during training periods, loan forgiveness, and scholarships, to make the profession accessible to individuals from lower-income backgrounds.

Our collective commitment to these strategies will have a profound impact on the lives of students across the nation. Together, we can build an education system that reflects the rich diversity of our country and upholds the promise of equal opportunity for every child.

Thank you for your time and dedication to this critical issue. I welcome any questions you may have and look forward to the possibility of your attendance at our upcoming Black Men in Education Convening in November.

Chairman BEAN. Nailed it. Thank you so much, Mr. El-Mekki, thank you very much. Our final witness is Dr. Greg Mendez, welcome to the Committee, and you are recognized for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF DR. GREG MENDEZ, PRINCIPAL, SKYLINE HIGH SCHOOL, MESA PUBLIC SCHOOLS, MESA, ARIZONA**

Mr. MENDEZ. Good morning. Thank you, Dr. Foxx, Chairman Bean, Ranking Member Bonamici, and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. As a high school principal, I have witnessed firsthand what the traditional methods of teacher prep programs are struggling to meet the evolving needs of not only our students, but the demands of educators as well.

The current model of teaching where one teacher works individually with a group of learners in a classroom, or a small box inside of a larger box that we call school, promotes unrealistic expectations by assuming individual teachers working in isolation can meet the needs of all students.

Unfortunately, the teacher prep programs not only promote this, but exacerbate it, by selling the idea that one person can do the job of many and meet the needs of all students. Today I will discuss my story about building team-based models in schools, and their benefits as well as some concerns associated with the current traditional teacher prep programs that limit our ability to hire a workforce to meet the needs of our students.

Restructuring our learning environments is necessary to not only meet the demands of students, but the working conditions in which our teachers work as well. Developing team-based models was our entry point. This model emphasizes working in teams, a specialization in skills and pedagogy, and pathways for community members to contribute to a learning environment.

When we began to think about team-based teaching in our school a few tenants were established. No. 1, a team will have multiple adults with distributed experience. No. 2, they will share a roster of students. During our first iteration of building teams, we noticed our teachers collaborating more, solving problems, working synergistically at deeper levels to improve the outcomes for not only students, but their own working conditions.

We saw an increase in job satisfaction, innovation, and perhaps most important, on-the-job professional development. As we partnered with Arizona State University and their initiative called The Next Education Workforce, we were able to have a thought partner in what the design of our teacher workforce could be.

To that end, we began to place student teachers on teams at our school. In short, our student teachers who were on teams, grew as professionals, and were more prepared to meet the demands of a 21st Century student body than teachers who were not on teams. This is a good start. However, there's a lot of work to be done. As I interview teachers year in and year out, it is evident that teacher prep programs are still producing teachers that are suited for a one teacher, one classroom model.

A few areas that stand out to me. There is a focus on scripted one-size fits all lessons, and there is a focus on specific grade level and content area only. These constraints present problems when

trying to hire educators, especially in a team-based model. Instead of being able to hire a specialized teacher in project-based learning, differentiated assessment, competency-based learning, and placing them on a team, I am confined to hiring simply a 9 through 12 math teacher.

Because of this approach, teachers who are training in the traditional prep programs are expected to be all things to all kids. This simply is not possible. Teachers are often ill-prepared and graduate from a program with a strong passion for content knowledge, but not a continuum of teaching skills.

We are reaching to improve programs. No. 1, focus certifications on skills and pedagogy, rather than rigid grade level bands and content areas only. Specialization in critical areas such as literacy, numeracy, assessment design, real world application, relevancy, and designed thinking prepare student teachers to work collaboratively, reflecting the realities of the job today.

By experiencing teaching in teams during their preparation, aspiring teachers can learn to leverage the strength and expertise of their colleagues, enhancing their own learning, and create more opportunities for working adults in our community to obtain specializations and contribute to the learning experience without undergoing an exhaustive preparation program.

These are all transferrable across grade levels and content areas, broadening the impact, and expanding the pool of educators. By moving toward specialization, and creating pathways for our community members to contribute, the conditions to build a more robust and effective teacher workforce can begin.

When school reform or redesign is on the table, school leaders often create and establish lofty goals. However, author James Clearwood states, "You don't rise to the level of your goals, you fall to the level of your systems." As such, a more intentional focus should be placed on improving our teacher prep programs if you want to improve our outcomes for our students and teachers.

In closing, I ask that you consider the potential of team-based teaching models in schools and support the effort to transform teacher prep programs for the benefit of our educators, our students, and the future of our educational system. Thank you.

[The Statement of Mr. Mendez follows:]

STATEMENT OF DR. GREG MENDEZ, PRINCIPAL, SKYLINE HIGH SCHOOL, MESA PUBLIC SCHOOLS, MESA, ARIZONA

Good morning, Chairwoman Foxx, Chairman Bean, Ranking Member Bonamici, and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. As a high school principal, I have witnessed firsthand where the traditional methods of teacher prep programs are struggling to meet the evolving needs of not only our students, but the needs of educators as well. The current model of teaching, where one teacher works individually with a group of learners in a classroom, or a small box inside of a larger box that we call school, promotes unrealistic expectations by assuming individual teachers working in isolation can meet the needs of all students. Unfortunately, the teacher prep programs not only promote this, but exacerbate it as well by selling the idea that one person can do the job of many and meet the needs of all students.

Today, I will discuss my story about building team-based models in schools and their benefits, as well as some concerns associated with the current traditional teacher preparation programs that limit our ability to hire a workforce to meet the needs of our students.

Restructuring our learning environments is necessary to not only meet the needs of the students, but the working conditions in which our teachers work as well. De-

veloping team-based models was our entry point. This model emphasizes working in teams, a specialization in skills and pedagogy, and pathways for community members to contribute to the learning environments. When we began to think about team-based teaching in our school, a few tenets were established:

1. A team will have multiple adults with distributed expertise.
2. Shared roster of students.

During our first iteration of building teams, we noticed our teachers collaborating more, solving problems, and working synergistically at deeper levels to improve the outcomes for not only students, but their own working conditions. We saw an increase in job satisfaction, innovation, and perhaps most important, on the job professional development.

As we partnered with Arizona State University and their initiative called the Next Education Workforce, we were able to have a thought partner in what the design of our teacher workforce could be. To that end, we began to place student teachers on teams at our school. In short, our student teachers who were on teams grew as professionals and were more prepared to meet the needs of a 21st century student body than teachers who were not on teams.

This is a good start. However, there is work to be done. As I interview teachers year in and year out, it is evident that teacher prep programs are still producing teachers that are suited for a one teacher, one classroom model.

A few areas that stand out:

1. There is a focus on scripted, one-size fits all lessons.
2. The focusing is on a specific grade level and content area only.

These constraints present problems when trying to hire educators, especially in a team-based model. Instead of being able to hire a specialized teacher in project-based learning, differentiated assessments, or competency based learning, and placing them on a team, I am confined to hiring a 9-12 general math teacher.

Because of this approach, teachers who are prepared in the traditional teacher prep programs are expected to be all things to all students. This simply is not possible. Teachers are often ill-prepared and graduate from a program with a strong passion for content knowledge, but not a continuum of specialized teaching skills.

Where can we improve teacher preparation programs?

1. Focus certifications on skills and pedagogy rather than rigid grade-level bands and content areas only
2. Specialization in critical areas such as literacy, numeracy, assessment design, real world application, relevancy, and design thinking.
3. Prepare student teachers to work collaboratively, reflecting the realities of the job today. By experiencing teaching in teams during their preparation, aspiring teachers can learn to leverage the strengths and expertise of their colleagues, enhancing their own learning.
4. Create more opportunities for working adults in our community to obtain specializations and contribute to the learning experience without undergoing an exhaustive preparation program.

These are all transferable across grade levels and content areas, broadening the potential impact and expanding the pool of educators. By moving towards specialization, and creating pathways for community members to contribute, the conditions to build a more robust and effective teacher workforce can begin.

When school reform or redesign is on the table, school leaders often create and establish lofty goals. However, author James Clear, states, "you don't rise to the level of your goals; you fall to the level of your systems." As such, a more intentional focus should be placed on improving our teacher prep programs if we want to improve our outcomes for students and teachers.

In closing, I ask you to consider the potential of team-based models in schools, and support the efforts to transform teacher preparation for the benefit of our educators, our students, and the future of our educational system.

Thank you.

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Chairman BEAN. Dr. Mendez, thank you very much. All our panelists, you did great, and under the Committee Rule 9, we will now give you some questions to further explore the discussion of the teacher shortage, is there a problem in America? We will talk about that. Under the 5-minute rule, I now recognize myself for 5 minutes.

Toss up, is the warning light on? Do we have to do something different? Anybody want to jump in? Is that true? We have got to change.

Dr. Basile.

Ms. BASILE. 100 percent.

Chairman BEAN. 100 percent, so the warning light on we have got to do something different because it is not working right, right now. Principal Greg, you are on the front line. Are you having a hard time hiring teachers and keeping them there?

Mr. MENDEZ. Yes, every day. I think being able to find qualified teachers who wanted to do the job, and it is very challenging, how or when we do get them, we do get them into model, we do believe we are retaining them at a higher rate. They are enjoying their profession, but getting their foot in the door has been a definite challenge.

Chairman BEAN. Very good. Now, both you and Dr. Basile both have talked about teams. What does that mean? If I am a student, what will that mean? Does that mean there are two teachers coming in, or multiple teachers coming in? What will I notice the difference as a student? Anybody?

Dr. Basile.

Ms. BASILE. We define teams as at least two teaches sharing a roster of students, right? A double roster. We talk about it like this. In what happens right now as you take a group of students, you say here are your 25 kids, your 25 kids, your 25, or maybe 30 or maybe 60, depending on where you live.

We hope, right, that every one of those teachers are the same, and every kid is going to get the same kind of experience, and they are not, because one of those teachers might be a brand new teacher. One of them might be an emergency teacher. One might be somebody who came in, who was an engineer coming back, and somebody might have 15 years of experience.

What we are saying in teams is how do all those people then, those four people because which one do you want for your kid? Do you want all of them? How do you look at kids, that same group of kids, look at the variance of those kids, the needs of those kids, and now build teams of adults around those kids that address the needs, teams of adults that have expertise that address the needs.

Chairman BEAN. If I am in the classroom it could be Ms. Jones 1 day. It could be Mr. Rogers the next day. They are interchangeable as heads of the teaching?

Ms. BASILE. You are in a classroom, and you have all four teachers.

Chairman BEAN. Right. There are four, yes, there are four, and they are coming, and when you are not teaching, and you are part of the team and you are not teaching, what are you doing?

Ms. BASILE. You are always teaching.

Chairman BEAN. You are always teaching.

Ms. BASILE. You are just grouping. You have a small group. You have a different small group. You are always teaching.

Chairman BEAN. Okay.

Ms. BASILE. Or you are planning, but you are always working.

Chairman BEAN. Your high school utilizes this method, Dr. Mendez. Is it working? Is that working, to have multiple teachers for each class?

Mr. MENDEZ. Yes. I think the first impact that happens is by wrapping, like at our school, our teams are five teachers and a special education teacher, so six total, around 150 kids, 180 kids maximum. If you are in that roster the first thing that happens is the students are known.

One of our goals in our district is to know every kid by name, serve them by strength and graduate them ready for a college career community. With that, with having a team, a student getting known is No. 1. Meeting their needs is No. 2, but those teachers are collaborating, they are co-creating and co-designing lessons, and learning experience for students.

At times there are multiple teachers in the room. At times there is not. It still is high school. Algebra, we taught at algebra, world history is world history, government is government, however, the impact is that teachers collectively can share their expertise to design better learning experiences to honestly meet the needs of all kids. When we say all kids, we do mean all kids, 10–4.

Chairman BEAN. No, 10–4. It is working. It is good. I would imagine when I am part of a team I think everybody does better, and I see that, and that is, I know, a complaint of teachers. I am not supported. I am by myself. I want to have somebody. No, this is something that we all need to explore the team approach.

Dr. Spooner, we have been told, or at least it is hard for folks that are not—that are experts in their field, but are not coming to the educational path they want to teach. Like if you know Bill Gates wanted to teach computers, or Elon Musk wanted to teach science, that they would not—they just could not come in the classroom, the barriers are so high to people who have expertise and want to give back.

Is that true? What can we do to welcome Elon Musk and Bill Gates to the teaching arena?

Ms. SPOONER. I would say that is true in many instances. We do have opportunities, and we are working through some possibilities, and again, strategically we need to think about what it for the children in the classrooms is that they need to know, before we begin looking at experts in disciplines.

For example, we have built certificate programs where individuals can come into the profession, such as Bill Gates, or someone who may have a mathematic major.

Chairman BEAN. Is it too hard right now? Would you say it is too hard? Is that an area we need to look at to make it easier for?

Ms. SPOONER. It is an area, yes. It is an area that we all need to look at to make sure that we are doing—the word “streamlining” was used, to make sure that we are streamlining, working with individuals to meet the needs of—or, meet their experience needs, and what that looks like in the classroom, and develop more streamlined programs, so that a person comes into the profession not doing a 4-year, but doing maybe a—

Chairman BEAN. Noted. No, no, you made your point.

Ms. SPOONER. Yes.

Chairman BEAN. Thank you very much.

Ms. SPOONER. Thank you.

Chairman BEAN. Thank you all for questions. Let us go to the Ranking Member now from the great State of Connecticut, Ms. Hayes, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. HAYES. Thank you. Thank you to our witnesses for being here today. I would first like to note that I am a teacher, and teaching is a profession, not an arena, not something that people just show up and start to do the job. It takes a tremendous amount of training, of skill, of practice, of pedagogy in order to do it.

I have read all of your testimony, and I have heard you today, and I agree with you all about the need to fully fund IDEA, about teacher shortages, about paying in some of these programs, but there was something that I did not hear that I would like to focus my attention on today.

As I said, I am a teacher. I went through traditional teacher preparation programs. My undergraduate degree was in history and secondary education. In my State, a master's degree is required, so I went on to get a master's degree in curriculum instruction. Then went on to get an advanced degree in education, which is required in Connecticut to be a department head, an administrator or principal.

I had 9 years of teacher preparation training at teacher preparation colleges, and one of the things that was lacking from all of that training, and I bring this up today because this is a hearing on equipping—properly equipping America's educators. That was trauma informed instructional practices.

I could have never been prepared in all of those 9 years of training for the death of peers of my students, having to be a grief counselor for school shootings. I was in the classroom when Sandy Hook occurred just eight miles down the road from us. I was in the classroom on 9/11.

Students coming in with families that are struggling with addiction, divorce, moving, all of those traumatic experiences gravely impacted students' ability to learn. Trauma has a significant impact on the ability of students to learn and behave in the classroom and interact socially. It can also lead to lower academic performances, more school absences, and an increased dropout rate.

Too often I saw my colleagues referring students for discipline, as opposed to getting to the root cause of the trauma, and the environments that they were growing in that were prohibiting them from thriving. Trauma informed education can help schools identify, address and manage traumatic stress.

It can also include examining the impacts of factors, such as racism, poverty and community violence. Mr. El-Mekki, thank you so much for being here. My question is for you. What measures can be taken to provide professional development for teachers, so that they can better support students who have faced traumatic experiences?

Additionally, what are some of the barriers we see to providing those things? It has been my experience that many people enter the profession bright-eyed and optimistic, and are worn out after a few short years, not because of the academic rigor, but because of all of the other things that they have no control over.

Mr. EL-MEKKI. Absolutely, and thank you for raising this very important point. My 26 years as a teacher and a principal were all in three Title I schools. The ability to provide support, both to the teachers, as well as the students, included social workers and counselors, and ongoing professional development, and while we were in the classroom.

I was also in the school during 9/11, but it would also push that beforehand we need people who are aware of that in the educative prep programming. Many of them have not been in that space for a pretty long time and are ill-equipped at times to prepare teachers and other staff to enter schools that need this additional support.

One of the ways that we look at this at the Center for Black Educator Development is we have high school students engaging in that already because it is a pre-apprenticeship, they are teaching first, second and third graders who may experience many of the things that you already have spoken about.

Receiving the coaching, the mentoring and the professional development as early as 9th grade, to think about what does this mean, and how does it mean? They have also become stronger advocates for themselves about what they need as current students, but they are clear eyed, and focused, as they matriculate through not only high school, but then choosing college, and continuing to work with us as college students.

This kind of professional development training and support bolsters the education, and children have to be well in order to learn at high rates.

Mrs. HAYES. I appreciate that. I appreciate you talking about the full spectrum, and not just one class, or one training, but ongoing efforts. I introduced the Supporting Trauma Informed Instructional Practices Act, which authorizes grants designed to help schools improve how they address the complex needs of students coping with devastating adverse childhood experiences, such as parental addiction, abuse, or witnessing violence.

The bill will develop or improve prevention, screening, referral, treatment and support services to students, while providing professional development to teachers, school leaders, specialized instruction support personnel, and mental health professionals.

These are the types of things that have to be included in any teacher preparation program that is attempting to prepare student teachers for what they will experience in the classroom. My time is expired, with that I yield back.

Chairman BEAN. Thank you very much. Let us go to the great State of Utah, where Mr. Burgess Owens is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. OWENS. Thank you. Thank you so much. First of all, I want to say how much I appreciate what you guys are doing. Innovation is a powerful concept if something is needed so well in this particular industry. I have been reminded that it was Horace Mann who was the father of public education, who passed away 20 years before Alexander Bell said the words, "Hello, Watson."

That Hello, Watson has now, because of innovation, risk, and a free market, has now turned into our smart phone. Unfortunately, the public education is still doing what Horace Mann did in the old days. This is so important, and we realize this is a national secu-

rity issue. What you guys are doing, you are leading out in terms of how our country will come back and be competitive in the end, in one of the areas we need to be very, very competitive.

Thank you so much for that. Dr. Basile, your testimony, you recommend that State and local government rewards school systems whose innovation leads to demonstratable improvement in learning outcomes. What do you think rewards to the school systems should consist of?

Ms. BASILE. I think there are two things here. One is we are thinking about innovation. First of all, every part of government needs to give schools permission to be innovative. They cannot hold them back, they need to let them do the kids of things, the kind of structural and systemic changes we're talking about here.

Two is that they need to support them financially to make sure that these things can happen, that change can happen, that innovation can happen. This is not without some financial support.

Mr. OWENS. Okay. One of the things that I meant to mention also in every industry, a free market rewards success, and it also gets rid of failure. We need to bring this to this industry. How can we—and I would like to get this suggestion. How can we—or is there some system in which we could start rewarding those who truly are good at their occupation, that they can literally make enough money that income is not their issue, like every other industry we have out there. There is no cap.

At the same time, find ways that those who are not doing their job find something else to do. Any suggestions, Dr. Basile, with that?

Ms. BASILE. It is a good question. I do not know that I have a good answer at this time.

Mr. OWENS. Can anybody address that? I know this is something that is so unique and different with this industry that we have not addressed yet. We talk innovation, this is the time to breakout of the old school way of thinking. How can we bring the best in the world, the best in our country to this industry if they love teaching, but they just cannot afford to do it?

Any suggestions out there of how State and local government collaboration?

Mr. EL-MEKKI. I hesitate to suggest that teachers and educators are going to make as much as people make in a free market, however I would say that salary is a tremendous issue. It should not cost money. You should not go into debt to lead a classroom. You should not go into debt to lead a school.

This is absolutely critical. The other part I would say that we are talking about teachers, but one of the most important levers to ensure that teachers are effective, is highly effective principals. There are only 100,000 public school principals in this country. They could all fit in Penn States Football Stadium. If we cannot get that right, both with the salary, the training, the ongoing coaching and mentoring, it is going to be a lot harder to support the three and a half million teachers, and the 50 million students.

I would say salaries and loan forgiveness, paid student teaching, all of these things, as well as just better designed working environments. That takes money, it takes investment to create. Teachers should not be isolated. They should be coached, mentored.

When I first became a teacher, I was on my way to law school. I decided to become a teacher because some had pointed the impact that it could make. I had an instructional coach, and I had an in-house mentor. Those are two investments that allowed me to flourish.

Mr. OWENS. Okay. Okay. I understand because my dad was a college professor 40 years, my mom was a teacher. I know the excitement, the passion that those who have this in the profession. We need to start thinking differently. I do believe there has been ways, like every other industry in our country, that free market could be brought into this.

We have to figure out a way to break out of this mindset. We have too many good people leaving the profession to do something where they could afford to have a life. We have people that would literally come out of different organizations, different corporations if they could afford to stay within this industry and do the very best for our kids.

Again, it is a different way of thinking, but we have a chance. Now, we are talking innovation, let us kind of put everything on the plate. Let us think differently than we have the last 150 years. It is time to leave the Horace Mann era and come to where we are now looking at smart phone concepts and ideas, and breaking the system that has not been working for us for so long. With that, I want to yield back. Thank you. Thank you so much you, guys.

Chairman BEAN. Thank you very much. Let us go to the great State of California, Representative Kiley, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. KILEY. I thank you, Mr. Chair, for holding this year, a very important topic. The reality is we need to be doing a lot more to support our teachers, and I say that not just because I was a high school teacher, my mom was a special ed teacher, but because any educator, or parent or student for that matter can tell you that the most important thing when it comes to driving educational success is having a highly effective teacher in the classroom.

Right now, the system is not working the way it should, or at least it is not getting enough folks into the classroom and keeping them there. 86 percent of public schools have said they struggled to hire teachers for this school year, and 16 percent of teachers left their school between the 2021 and 2021-'22 school year.

In fact, enrollment in teacher education, teacher preparation programs is just 70 percent of what it was a decade ago, and you know, it is understandable why in some sense, often preparing to be a teacher, going through a certification program, requires years of expensive schooling, and then once you do ultimately get in the classroom, teachers often do not get paid what they should.

We definitely need to have alternate pathways into the classroom, as several of the witnesses are making possible, but then the other side of it is retention. I mean I think that for all the years of prep that is often necessary to become a teacher, then once you are in the classroom all too often teachers are just left to fend for themselves. There is not the level of professional development that is needed.

I think it is under appreciated what a challenging task being a teacher is, what a demanding form of leadership it is, where you

are placed in front of 30-some young people who may have a lot of things on their mind on any given day, other than what you want to teach them, and so just the classroom management aspect of it, and then actually being able to impart knowledge when you have people at varying different levels of proficiency.

It could also be isolating, since you are spending hours and hours a day without the collaboration of other adults, and then, even once the school day is over, teachers could spend hours grading papers, getting detailed feedback, and again, not necessarily getting the compensation they deserve.

Then in addition to all of that, we are living in a rapidly changing world where the purposes of education were the nature of the economy, the demands of our workforce are changing quite rapidly. All of that serves to really put the challenges that we face or make the challenges that we face quite urgent.

I am encouraged to see some of the ideas at this hearing. One other thing I will mention is that there are also opportunities. Just the last couple days, Open AI released its new advanced voice assistant, which you know, anybody now on their phone could effectively have a personal tutor with limitless knowledge that is specifically tailored to your level of proficiency.

These tools—Khan Academy is also incorporating it into its offerings. They can also be used for things like grading, for a lot of the things that make teaching challenging, scaffolding, they can be of assistance. Now, none of that is to say, and to deny the teacher student relationship is absolutely fundamental.

I think that the question for the folks here, maybe for the principal as well as for our witnesses who run teacher prep programs, if you want to weigh in as well, is how should we think about these tools when it comes to preparing the next generation of teachers?

Ms. SPOONER. Thank you so much. I am sorry—okay. Thank you so much for your question. You are absolutely on target in terms of the ever-changing landscape of which we find ourselves, and that is part of the need that we are looking at in terms of we run a kindergarten through fifth grade laboratory school, which means we have children in that building every day all the time.

Immersing our candidates, No. 1, into that schooling, into other schools, so that they practice, and they see the work, but it starts with teacher preparation. In terms of our curriculum redesign, our constantly looking at how we look at that, and the technologies that we use, and utilizing those technologies to develop and help design the work that we do, but also to support that, not take it from the work of the teacher.

Because as you have indicated, the teacher student ratio, or relationship is so critical. Thank you.

Mr. MENDEZ. Just support to your point, working in a team, having that expertise spread out across a team of teachers, somebody who is well versed in AI, or the technology you are speaking of to improve the outcomes for students is very important. If we can get to a lot more kids, much more quickly if that's spread out across teams, and somebody has that experience within that group, or within that school to affect the outcome of kids.

Ms. BASILE. Let me just also add around the technology piece, because I think it is absolutely right on. We need technology, and

we need it in the right ways. We need technology just to power learning. We need technology to actually power teams of teachers so they can work together. We need technology that can also power systems and change systems. Most data systems, H.R. systems are built around one teacher, one classroom models.

Those systems also need to change, and I believe that AI can have a big part to play in all of that. It is broader than what is just happening in classrooms. It is the entire system and how AI can support the entire system in so many different ways, and help us do what we do so much better.

Mr. KILEY. Thanks very much. I yield back.

Chairman BEAN. Thank you very much, and thank you. Let us go to the Chair of the Education and Workforce Committee from the great State of North Carolina, it is Dr. Virginia Foxx. You are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. FOXX. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Dean Spooner, thank you for your testimony about the work you are doing at the State and local level in North Carolina to equip great teachers. I have long believed the most important work in schools happens at the State and local level.

You touched on this briefly in your testimony. Could you talk a little bit more and keeping in mind I have got two other questions to ask. Could you talk more about how you learn from local communities about their teacher workforce needs?

Ms. SPOONER. Absolutely, thank you. We have a very strong, and this is something that is deep in the DNA of our university, and also our program. Partnership, meaning that means you meet collaborative. You meet face to face. You go into the community, with the superintendents, with the partners, that is an advantage that I have at Appalachian to be able to sit with them at a minimum, a quarterly basis.

We also have begun to pull in more of the community college partners, Presidents of community colleges to work, so it is an intentional purposeful work that we do to collaborate to learn from them so they can learn from us. We build it together.

Mrs. FOXX. Thank you very much. Dr. Basile, I enjoyed my visit very much to Arizona State and am really excited about what you are doing as well as Appalachian State in terms of the teacher preparation programs. You have developed a number of connections with neighboring schools.

There is a focus there also on working at the local level. How do you build trust with these districts, and convince them to move away from the one teacher, one classroom model?

Ms. BASILE. Change moves at the seed of trust. We say that all the time. We also encourage people to start small, all right, so we are not walking in, and we are not telling them what to do and saying here is how you change your entire school at one time. We say look, start with one team. Find a really good leader, find a really good team of teachers that are really interested in this, who understand what we are trying to do, and you start there.

What happens after that is really pretty amazing, because what we have seen in schools, they start with one team, and by the end of the year everybody is in teams because people look in and say I want to work that way as well. It is helping us to retain teachers.

It is helping right now that all of the data that we are getting back, teachers are more satisfied.

We are seeing better retention numbers. We are seeing some early, early, early student return on student data that is positive. All the indicators are positive, and that is helping us to build that level of trust.

Mrs. FOXX. Thank you. Dr. Mendez, as I mentioned to you before, we know that the key to a successful school is a good principal who hires good teachers, and parental involvement. Please tell us more about how you manage the relationships with your teachers. When you started to move away from the one teacher, one classroom model, how did you ensure teachers would buy into the changes?

Mr. MENDEZ. Thank you. To kind of echo Dr. Basile there, we started with a small team, first and foremost. We spent a lot of time reading, discussing, looking at research around the power of proximity, the power of collaboration with teachers, and once we found a group to start working together, they become the marketing firm for the change that's happening on the campus, and those teachers begin to speak about their working conditions, helping other students more, how their students are more engaged.

With that, we were able to expand our teams beyond where we were, and we are up to teamed 9th, 10th and 11th grade this school year. We are still working on 12th grade because each kid has their own path to graduation. That is where we started, and I think there is power when teachers start to work together and collaborate.

I think I will say outside of when teachers work together, teachers are amazing people, and it is an amazing profession. When you allow them the agency to work together, and really hone in on their skills and their passions for education, you know, the possibilities are endless.

Mrs. FOXX. Thank you. It is not a mystery to me it seems that we have had difficulty in the last few years recruiting people to go into teaching. I have often mentioned that we put an adult in a room with 30 kids, lock the door, and say you are in there all day long all by yourself handling these students.

Again, it should not be a mystery. I do not know very many people who want to go into that kind of environment. What you all are doing, and you have all mentioned collaboration. You have all mentioned teams, and if you look around in the private sector, you see the word teams. You see the word associate. You see the word collaboration constantly.

I think it is very exciting that we are seeing this new approach to preparing people to teach by doing the things you are doing. Really focusing on the real world, what is it going to be like to do classroom management in addition to exposing the students to the subject matter. I am very excited about what we are hearing today from the teacher preparation, from Dr. Mendez, in terms of what is going on.

I think that we are learning a lot, and that the world is learning a lot, that what we need to be doing to have effective teachers, so thank you all very much, and thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your indulgence.

Chairman BEAN. Thank you, Dr. Foxx. Let us go back to the great State of California, where Representative DeSaulnier is standing by, and he is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DESAULNIER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for giving me an opportunity. It has been my privilege in the three decades or more that I have been in elected office, starting with city council to become friends and part of the disability community. I spent a lot of time with special needs, special education, teachers, young people in California.

There was a time when I was in the State legislature where Governor Brown, and we developed a formula to help. It was called Local Control Formula. Billions of dollars reallocated to give school districts more discretion, rather than have the State overly manage very different communities in a large State.

I had a superintendent I had great respect for in a medium-sized district, tell me I can take all this extra money and put it into my special needs community, and it still would not be enough. My question, Mr. El-Mekki is the GAO just did a report that it has gotten worse to try to attract people to go into teaching in general, and retain people, particularly for this community that is grown with challenges around developmentally challenged students and population, autism, and other things.

That GAO says it has 15 percent of the student population in the United States, is in this category, but we cannot get young people to go into teaching in general, but particularly into this community. Then we get these wonderful people that we all have had the good fortune to be able to work with, who want to go in this field, and they burn out.

The retention is more challenging than actually getting people to go into the field. Given that, that it has been difficult all along, and IDEA was a wonderful idea by Congress many years ago. I have had administrators complain about how much time they spent doing the paperwork in IDEA, but would like more discretion just to solve the problem, along with the oversight that is completely reasonable for Congress to ask for in our role in this community.

Could you just maybe enlighten us with the GAO report of the challenges that you see that have only seemed to be getting worse for this particular community, and the needs for this community, for both attracting good teachers, but retaining them, and what we need to do to accomplish that goal to attract many of these wonderful young people who go into the field, and then retain them, and give the support they need, so these kids can be successful, and we change the curve.

Mr. EL-MEKKI. Yes, thank you for that question. Very important component of this ecosystem. I would echo what some of my colleagues mentioned, the pre-work is really the preparation. We encourage our apprentices to become dual certified. Whatever their content is, but then also adding special ed as a dual certification.

Some are extremely interested but say they cannot afford the additional classes. The one thing is on the front end, to help and actually incentivize, more and more teachers to become dual certified. We know that the student population is becoming more and more diverse.

That includes students of special needs. To be able to serve them well, as well as doing other work, not only requires them to be prepared, but also to have the support within schools. Again, as my colleagues have emphasized, having that one classroom, and one teacher, trying to not only think about the 30 students that were mentioned, but also 30 diverse needs within that classroom is extremely challenging for one person to do, no matter how gifted they are.

On the front end, preparing them, but then also making sure that the support continues throughout, because the support for a teacher is also support for the student. We believe in student centered approaches, that are teacher supportive. Having aides and assistants, and other colleagues supporting that work. Having policies that support students with special needs as well, and making sure that they are not being marginalized, making sure that they are reaching their optimal levels of achievement.

All of these things require investment on the front end, but then continuous. Too often the training, the professional development that our teachers receive is a one-shot deal.

Mr. DESAULNIER. The current Superintendent of Public Instruction California, Tony Thurman, is a friend from the same community I represent. I have known him for a long time. His predecessor was one of my best friends. When we talk about this in a big State like California, with a lot of diversity, the bureaucracy of trying to get that—just what you described, and then the own sort of administrators' perceptions, given the shortfall in funding is a real challenge.

Even though we—as you just described it, deploying those best practices is another big challenge in big areas. Any response to that?

Mr. EL-MEKKI. I would say that there are places, I am sure, that are doing well, and those—the strategies at our goal level have to be magnified and exemplified, and used as exemplars, and then the incentives to replicate that can continue. I think too often there are bright spots, but those bright spots are often disconnected from the discourse around the country happening particularly in states like California, that are so large, so diverse.

Mr. DESAULNIER. I appreciate that.

Mr. EL-MEKKI. I would just also say just bringing in people from the community, they are often not invited into the profession.

Mr. DESAULNIER. Um-hmm. I appreciate that. Mr. Chairman, thanks for indulging me. I yield back.

Chairman BEAN. Very good. Thank you so much. If you are just joining us, this is the Subcommittee on Early Childhood Elementary and Secondary Education. We are talking about the teacher shortage that America is facing. It is in every State. The teacher retention challenge is in every State.

We are expecting our Ranking Member in just a few minutes, and as we wait on her coming, she is here. Breaking news. Yes. She is here, so Ranking Member, right on time, so Ranking Member, welcome back. You are recognized for any questions. Yes, ma'am.

Ms. BONAMICI. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the witnesses. I have not figured out how to be in more than

one place at a time. I was talking about the very important issue of childcare. Thank you again, Chair Bean, and for accommodating me.

I am really encouraged by some of the innovative policies and programs that exist to recruit and retain educators. One of those promising approaches is the Grow Your Own Program, in which young people from local high schools are recruited to become educators in their communities. It is especially valuable in high need and underserved districts.

In Oregon, the Education Advancement Council has developed local and regional partnerships with districts and universities, and they provide grants for these Grow Your Own Programs, and in the most recent cycle 29 districts and universities received grants, and were able to support career pathways into education.

Mr. EL-MEKKI, what role do Grow Your Own Programs play in reducing barriers to entering the teaching profession? How can these programs most effectively prepare aspiring teachers for the realities of the classroom?

Mr. EL-MEKKI. Yes, absolutely. I think Grow Your Own is one of the inspiring innovations that can occur. We need to make sure that Grow Your Own also has a standard because unfortunately it is beginning to mean a lot of different things for a lot of different people. We celebrate the work that National Center for Grow Your Own is doing in helping with states and districts who work on figuring out how to build long-term pipelines for future teachers.

Removing financial barriers, providing paid training, and ongoing support. I think for high schools that is the bulk of our work, and I think about the 17 black men educators who were highly effective. We were doing well, relatively good looking, and none of us had been invited into the profession until after we had graduated from college.

Ms. BONAMICI. Can I just ask if there are some key policy changes that could expand this and other innovative models to make them successful?

Mr. EL-MEKKI. Absolutely. One is further investing in career and technical education for high school students. We have voc ed for every other career. U.S. Labor Department has started looking at teaching as a workforce. That is critical, and we have to continue to do that.

To ignore, to have—we need the welders, we need the carpenters, we need all the other things, but we also need teachers—

Ms. BONAMICI. Absolutely.

Mr. EL-MEKKI [continuing]. Who will eventually do that. To invite them into the profession early on, give them career technical credit, as well as doing enrollment credit, partnering with the IAGs to be able to have dual enrollment credit, as well as CTE. One of the biggest levers—

Ms. BONAMICI. A lot of conversations about those two issues in this Committee over the years.

Mr. EL-MEKKI. Absolutely. That CTE investment.

Ms. BONAMICI. Appreciate that. I also want to bring up before my time expires, the issue of educator compensation. We want the best and the brightest to become educators, but research shows that compensation has had a pretty dramatic effect on whether individ-

uals choose to become teachers, as well as how long they remain in the profession.

Unfortunately, many teachers earn much less than similarly educated professionals, and many—some even need to rely on public assistance programs to make ends meet. According to the Learning Policy Institute, in 2023 in Oregon, the average annual teaching starting salary was about \$40,000.00.

When compared to similar educated professionals in the State, teachers earned significantly less, and that's unacceptable. Dr. Mendez, I understand that in Arizona you have a significant pay gap between teachers and other similarly educated professionals.

How does low compensation for teachers affect your ability to recruit and retain high quality teachers? Then, Mr. El-Mekki, if you could add how increased compensation might help improve teacher recruitment and retention, including for teachers of color.

Mr. MENDEZ. Thank you for that. I think first and foremost for us I know in our community, and we want to make sure that we create an environment that teachers want to be in, first and foremost. If that does not exist, we are not going to attract anybody to come in and teach for us anyway.

Now, in terms of compensation, I leave that to the people above my pay grade in my district, and in our State, and I think the people in those communities have the right to be represented, and consider what is best for their community, and their local context.

For me, as far as teachers coming into the profession, you know I did it as well. I was a special education teacher, and I got in the profession. I knew what the salary scale was when I signed up, and I remember getting in because I wanted to help children.

I wanted to help a community out, and so knowing that I think it is really about the environment we create for teachers, and we have noticed that with a better environment, teachers are sticking around, and over the long haul, a lot of them do pretty well.

Ms. BONAMICI. I do not doubt—I know educators are passionate, and often times they understand, and they are in the profession because they love teaching, because they want to make a difference in the students' lives. Then when you look at things like if they have their own kids, look at the cost of childcare, look at the costs, and if they have student loan payments.

It is just not going to pencil out, and for a job that is this important, we really do need to focus on compensation, and Mr. El-Mekki, the clock has run out, but could you just say would increased compensation help recruit diverse teachers?

Mr. EL-MEKKI. It would. It would support that tremendously. It is so important that we actually added that into our programming. Students who take our CTE course and then decide to become teachers, we provide a \$40,000.00 investment in them. That is us, just a small nonprofit, \$40,000.00. \$20,000.00 while they are matriculating through college, that will help reduce costs, but then when they get to their fifth year of teaching, we give them a \$20,000.00 retention stipend, just to be able to augment the low starting salary that many of them will have.

Ms. BONAMICI. Understood. I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman BEAN. Thank you, do not go too far, Ranking Member because we are about to begin closing statements, and I yield to you for a closing statement, or thought.

Ms. BONAMICI. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, once again, thank you to the witnesses for being here, and discussing this really important topic. I know we want students of all ages, from the youngest, I'm a big supporter of investments in early childhood education, so when students get to kindergarten and beyond, they are prepared.

We want all students from the youngest, to those nearing graduation to get a high-quality, well rounded education that prepares them for whatever path they take in life. For many of them that path might be a passion for teaching, but we need to make sure that they have a good, smooth path to get there that is not going to burden them with significant debt or concerns.

To accomplish that, we have to—we must recruit and retain and support educators. As we have discussed today, this country has struggled with teacher recruitment and retention for many years, and of course the COVID-19 pandemic did not help any.

In fact, it created new and unforeseen problems in our education system, exacerbated existing challenges. Educators have been speaking about for decades. I remember talking with educators during that time, and how incredibly frustrated and concerned and worried they were for their students, the health of their students, the health of their students' families, and not knowing what to do, and wanting to do their best, but it was incredibly challenging navigating those tough years.

I hope we can continue discussing innovative ways to improve teacher recruitment and preparation, so educators have the skills and the support they need, and students get the quality education they deserve. Thank you again for being here, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Chairman BEAN. Thank you very much, Ranking Member. American, we have driven the education vehicle into the shop, and we have held our breath. What is the mechanic going to say? Is it a total rebuild, as you know, what is the outlook? How much is it going to cost? The mechanics of education are before us, America.

The good news is they have not recommended that we need a rebuild, just a tune-up with a heavy dose of innovation. If you want a second opinion, we have got a second, a third and a fourth opinion that have all said America, your education system needs innovation. It sounds like, Dr. Basile, you have said early numbers are in, and it is making a difference.

Teacher burn out, we did not even—I lost track of my time too. I wanted to talk about day 3,000 versus day 1. It is in your written testimony. Burn out is a big deal, and you feel like you are alone making it. You are not making a difference, and you are just tired. What you all recommended is something that America needs to take a look at.

The Federal Government does not control education, it is local, it is states. If you are watching America, ASU—your choice. ASU, Arizona State, or Appalachian State has innovative ways that they are making a difference, the team approach.

Dr. Mendez, Principal Greg, as I call him, you can attest that it is making a difference. Teachers feel empowered as well as know that they are supported, and so it is something to explore, something to explore, and I encourage school systems across America, let us take a look. Maybe this is our answer of handling the challenges coming before.

Here are two great things to me, and I am a salesman. One is it does not pit winners and losers against each other. This—a team approach, everybody wins. Students win, but teachers win, and we are all on the same team of making big changes for our education system, so everybody is a win.

The other thing is I know—I know it is always better to have more money than less money, but that was not the theme. You did not all say we need massive amounts of new money. This is existing money, but just using innovation, so that is something that is very exciting. America's education system, if you are listening, maybe this is something we need to explore without the massive price tag that many times that people come before us.

Panelists, I had pretty high expectations for you. I said that you all were going to be all-stars in education reform, and you delivered, and in fact you exceeded expectations, so I am delighted for each of you to come. Many people do not know it is your own dime, and it is your own time to be here, and so thank you for coming forward.

Hopefully, we've sparked the interest of America to call you and to learn more. You have given us great information that is part of our record, and people can Google that to learn more as well. With that, I am looking around. Am I able to—are we ready to hit this on that? Is that okay to do?

Thank you so much for everybody tuning in here. We have got a great crowd here to do. I thank everybody for coming, and without objection, there being no further business, the Subcommittee stands, and this hearing is now adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:39 a.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

