



LEGISLATIVE POSITION MEMO

Philadelphia Federation of Teachers
Jerry T. Jordan, President

December 13, 2021

To: Members of the General Assembly

From: Jerry T. Jordan, President

Re: Substitute Teaching Bill; 'Transparency' Bill; EITC/OSTC Legislation

Substitute Teaching Bill: Opposed

The PFT is opposed to legislation that would permit individuals with 60 college credits to serve as substitute teachers. It is precedent setting bad public policy that will, ultimately, shortchange students who have long suffered the consequences of systemic underfunding and disinvestment. The substitute crisis was further exacerbated by the outsourcing of substitutes to a private entity. Their 'fill rates' have been abysmal from the start.

Further, we are opposed to legislation that would allow paraprofessionals (PSRPs) to serve as substitutes, as this program would remove paraprofessionals from the critical services they provide to our students.

Summary of Concerns:

- We do not believe that a quickly implemented 'fix' for a years-long crisis in substitute teaching vacancies is feasible, equitable, or sensible.
- We cannot and will not support a bill that is seeking a band aid solution to a years long system of disinvestment.
- For decades, Black and brown students, and students experiencing poverty, have been systemically short changed. Systemic investments are necessary to ensure that the years-long disinvestment is rectified.
- This bill has the potential to create long term negative impacts for many districts; Philadelphia and other districts educating Black and brown students and students experiencing poverty will once again be forced to do more with less.
- Allowing paraprofessionals to serve as substitutes takes them directly from the classrooms, where in Philadelphia they primarily work with our students with special needs. We know that if this becomes law, it will simply remove paraprofessionals from these critical positions.

Solutions:

- Relax the PSERS regulations that prohibit retirees from substituting beyond a certain amount each year. This can be done by Administrative action at the state level. Then engage in recruitment programs to attract retirees to the program.
- Substitutes should be represented by their local union and outsourcing should cease.
- To address the substitute crisis, we need to address the holistic crisis facing public education- underfunding and inequity. Other legislative 'quick' fixes will, in fact, have a negative impact and will in fact exacerbate these discrepancies. The two solutions outlined above will not address the crisis in a holistic way, but should be seen as positive steps forward.

HB1332: Curriculum 'Transparency': Opposed

- This bill, in the name of 'transparency,' is part of a national [trend](#) to prohibit the teaching of racism.
- It has always been, and will continue to be, crucial that schools are places of learning—and that means teaching hard truths, particularly those around our country's shameful history of systemic racism.

EITC/OSTC Expansion: Opposed

Further, we remain steadfastly opposed to ANY legislation that increases funding to EITC or OSTC programs. These programs exist at the expense of public school students and taxpayers.

- Voucher programs in any form fly in the face of the constitutional and moral obligation to provide a thorough and efficient system of public education to all of our children.
- Instead of looking for ways to truly fund public education so that our students can receive the resources they so richly deserve (and to which they are constitutionally entitled), the legislature is once again considering legislation aimed at privatizing and profiting from public education.