



LEGISLATIVE POSITION MEMO

Philadelphia Federation of Teachers
Jerry T. Jordan, President

December 14, 2021

To: Members of the General Assembly

From: Jerry T. Jordan, President

Re: HB412

The PFT remains opposed to HB412 as amended.

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 sensical.
- 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.
 - **To this end, We support the portion of HB412's amendment:**
 - Adds Section 129 Section 129. Special Provisions Applicable to Limited School Years to School Code
 - New section
 - For SY 21-22 and SY22-23 only, a school with a substitute teacher shortage may hire retired teachers without the retiree losing retirement benefits.
- 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.