



Workforce training doesn't start when workers begin their careers. It starts when they enter the classroom and are greeted by a teacher.

Teachers are the force behind motivated and well-prepared students. They impart knowledge, teach life skills, and serve as mentors and role models for thousands of students. Unfortunately, Pennsylvania is experiencing a teacher shortage. It negatively impacts classrooms in every corner of the Commonwealth, with some of the most acute shortages in STEM fields, where our businesses need workers the most.

If we do not address this crisis and rebuild our teacher pipeline, we will lose a generation of young people who could build their careers or businesses in Pennsylvania. That is why we urge you to act now, during this year's budget negotiations, to help ease the teacher shortage crisis.

Pennsylvania is experiencing a severe teacher shortage. The numbers are stark. In the past decade, the number of certified teachers produced by Pennsylvania's education programs has fallen by 75%, and teacher turnover is at an all-time high. The state now issues more emergency certificates—granted to underprepared teachers when schools cannot find qualified teachers—than regular teaching certificates to fully qualified teachers, leaving our children at a severe disadvantage as they seek the skills and knowledge to advance their learning.

According to Dr. Ed Fuller, Pennsylvania needs an estimated 8,469 additional qualified teachers to fill current vacancies and positions staffed by underprepared emergency-certified teachers. His estimate doesn't include additional teachers to replace teachers leaving each year or the additional positions districts could need if funding increases and the student population grows.

Quite simply, we must rebuild our teacher pipeline and make teaching attractive to those who want to join and build careers in the profession.

We are grateful for the bipartisan steps the legislature has taken to address the teacher shortage crisis. Last year, you initiated and funded a student-teacher stipend program. Our educator community and our students greatly appreciated the new student-teacher stipend program. Unfortunately, the demand has far outpaced the funding, with approximately 4,000 student teachers applying for approximately 700 stipends. This year, we request \$50 million in recurring funding for the program. By fully funding the student-teacher stipend program, we will eliminate a significant barrier for many young people to enter the profession.

In addition, we are advocating for a \$10 million allocation in the 2024-25 state budget for Grow-Your-Own programs that encourage districts to train future teachers, often starting in high



school. In Scranton, Keystone College has partnered with the Scranton School District to offer teaching instruction to high school students that helps them learn classroom skills while making the certification process easier. Programs like this are essential in nurturing local talent and ensuring committed and well-prepared educators from our communities staff our schools. These programs need more support and funding from the Commonwealth, and we encourage you to support the Grow-Your-Own initiative in the state budget.

As leaders in our local communities who advocate for our businesses and their workforce, we see and hear firsthand the importance of ensuring we have excellent teachers in our classrooms. We need to equip the next generation of young people with the skills and confidence they need for graduation and beyond. We will be severely disadvantaged against our neighboring states if we do not.

With your support, we can make significant strides in alleviating the teacher shortage crisis. By making strategic investments this year, we can ensure a robust pipeline of qualified teachers who can create great learning environments for our children and strengthen our workforce and economy.

Let's achieve this hopeful vision together.

Sincerely,

