Good Afternoon, Congressmen Takano and Pocan, fellow citizens. My name is Harold Acord. I am a Spanish and German teacher now in my 29th year teaching in Moreno Valley. Currently, I am serving as President of the Moreno Valley Educators Association. As we have been hearing, our Nation is facing a crisis in our teacher force. Less and less people each year are attracted to our profession. The dwindling number of candidates for certification who enroll in teacher preparation programs each year reflects this. Our nation’s teacher/educator workforce does not reflect the diversity of the students whom we teach. We can and should do more to recruit and retain a diverse teacher/educator workforce.

In order to create and keep a diverse pool of teacher candidates we need to begin early during an undergraduate’s education to provide opportunities for gaining experience in educational settings. Experiences in the field should take place early and often. It is important to offer an undergraduate teacher preparation with early field experience. In California, an additional fifth year beyond the bachelor's is required for teacher candidates. There needs to be greater support for students of color and those growing up in poverty during all of these experiences. Even during high school, there should be opportunities for those high school students who are interested in being educators to explore their interests and engage in teaching experiences. In this way, diverse students will see teaching as an honored profession. They will also perceive the education field as a viable and worthy option after college.

But just getting diverse candidates into our profession is not enough. There should be incentives for teachers to remain in the profession, beyond their induction/early career time. There should be career ladders that do not only lead to administration for teachers. As professionals, we need to have opportunities to lead in our profession where we are able to work with newer educators and those who prepare educators in Institutes of Higher Education and share our expertise. Some examples of these opportunities could be; teacher residencies in universities, joint research, professional leaders/coaches, curriculum development, teacher in residency in state departments, and I dare say, working with our unions to promote our profession and listen to the professional voice of our members.

During the fifth year of teacher candidate preparation there should be a focus on residency models where teachers have both support from classroom teachers and tenure lined university faculty. Induction into our profession should begin here. Then it should extend to the beginning years of an educator’s on the job experiences. This induction should help a newer educator reflect on one’s own craft. This will help in ensuring that those who come into our profession will want to stay and will understand that we all continue to improve and engage in reflection over our time in our careers.
None of what I have stated is a magic pill, however, and it will cost money. It is vitally important that in our Nation, we work together to shift the view of the Education Profession that is held by many. We need to invest in this field in order to attract and retain professional educators who want to make a career of educating our next generations. That is the most important work of any nation.