



July 1, 2021

The Honorable Bernard Sanders
Chairman
Senate Committee on the Budget
624 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington DC, 20510

The Honorable Lindsey Graham
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on the Budget
624 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington DC, 20510

The Honorable John Yarmuth
Chairman
House Committee on the Budget
204-E Cannon House Office Building
Washington DC, 20515

The Honorable Jason Smith
Ranking Member
House Committee on the Budget
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The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairwoman
Senate Committee on Health, Education,
Labor, and Pensions
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
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The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Health, Education,
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The Honorable Robert “Bobby” Scott
Chairman
House Committee on Education and Labor
2176 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Ranking Member
House Committee on Education and Labor
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The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairwoman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services, and
Education
Room S-128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services, and
Education
Room S-128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa L. DeLauro
Chairwoman
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services, and
Education
Room H-307, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services, and
Education
Room H-307, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy, Chairman Sanders, Ranking Member Graham, Chairman Yarmuth, Ranking Member Smith, Chairwoman Murray, Ranking Member Burr, Chairman Scott, Ranking Member Foxx, Ranking Member Blunt, Chairwoman DeLauro, and Ranking Member Cole:

The Coalition for Teaching Quality represents national civil rights, disability, parent, student, community, and education organizations advocating together to ensure that all students have access to well prepared and effective teachers and school leaders.

Unfortunately, prior to the pandemic, historically underserved students were disproportionately taught by inexperienced teachers or teachers on substandard licenses (e.g. long-term substitutes, emergency credentialed, or out of field teachers).¹ The COVID-19 crisis has only exacerbated these inequities at a time when students – and our society – can least afford it. As Congress considers the fiscal year 2022 budget and infrastructure plans, we urge you to help our country rebuild from the pandemic in an equitable manner where all students have access to a well-prepared, diverse, experienced, and stable educator workforce.

We cannot afford to return to a “normal” where more than 100,000 classrooms were staffed by substitutes or teachers without training, and schools with high enrollments of students of color were four times as likely to employ uncertified teachers as schools with low enrollment of students of color.² Likewise, we should not go back to a time when nearly every state reported shortages in high-need subjects like math, science, special education, and bilingual education and English language instruction.³

To chart a new course we need robust, sustained, systemic, and research-based investments in the educator workforce that support educators throughout their career so that they have the skills, knowledge, and dispositions to help students thrive, especially the students furthest from opportunity. We applaud the holistic investments in the educator workforce—from comprehensive preparation through teacher leadership—that the Biden-Harris Administration has articulated in its budget for this fiscal year 2022 and in its ten-year \$9 billion proposal in the American Families Plan (AFP). We write to support these policies and ensure that the funding allocated to them matches our country’s current needs.

Now, it is time for Congress to act to:

1. Invest in comprehensive educator preparation
2. Make access to comprehensive educator preparation affordable
3. Support new teachers through mentoring and veteran teachers by providing them leadership opportunities
4. Underwrite the cost of obtaining high-need certifications and certifications associated with greater effectiveness.

As such, we ask that Congress work in earnest to swiftly take up the following recommendations:

1. Invest in Comprehensive Educator Preparation

Access to comprehensive pre-service teacher preparation – that includes intensive student teaching as well as learning about children’s learning and development, curriculum and teaching methods, and how to teach English learners and students with disabilities – is a key ingredient in ensuring that students have access to a well-prepared, diverse, experienced, and stable educator workforce.

Research has shown that teachers who enter the profession through less comprehensive preparation pathways – such as emergency and alternative pathways that do not offer student teaching and a full curriculum for teaching – are two to three times more likely to turn over than those who receive comprehensive preparation.⁴

Recent research in North Carolina illustrates this point. It showed that teachers prepared by state teacher education programs had the highest rates of retention in the state – with 85% still teaching in the state after three years and 72% teaching after five years. In contrast, fewer than half (48%) of lateral entry teachers (the state’s alternative route to certification that requires no preparation before entry), and just 7% of Teach for America (TFA) teachers, were still teaching in North Carolina after five years.⁵

At a time when the educator workforce does not reflect the rich diversity of our nation and research confirms the benefits of a diverse educator workforce for all students,⁶ it is important to note that many teachers cannot afford the cost of a comprehensive teacher preparation program, and enter through alternative routes for financial reasons, unaware that their under-preparation could cause them to give up on teaching at higher rates. Unfortunately, teachers of color are most likely to be placed in this situation, enrolling in alternative certification programs at twice the rate of white candidates (20% vs. 10% in 2014-15).⁷

Inadequate preparation for teachers and high rates of turnover both undermine student achievement.⁸ Fortunately, the Biden-Harris’ FY 2022 budget and the AFP propose to invest in comprehensive educator preparation that is shown to support teacher retention and student achievement through the Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP) program, the Augustus F. Hawkins Centers for Excellence program, and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part D personnel preparation program (IDEA-D-PP).

Increased investments in TQP would help expand teacher residencies and Grow Your Own programs. Teacher residency programs are a pathway into teaching that help to prepare diverse cohorts of teachers, increase teacher retention, and produce more effective teachers than less comprehensive preparation routes.⁹ Grow Your Own programs recruit and train teacher candidates from nontraditional populations that are more likely to reflect the local communities they plan to teach in. Candidates receive financial and other support like coaching as they work to complete their teaching credentials.¹⁰ TQP is a vital program that has been chronically underfunded. Over the past decade, there has been a cumulative gap of over \$2.5 billion between TQP’s authorization and funding levels.

The Augustus F. Hawkins Centers for Excellence program, which is specifically designed to support comprehensive teacher preparation at programs at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), and other minority-serving institutions (MSIs) of higher education including Hispanic-Serving Institutions, has never been funded. Yet teacher preparation programs at these institutions are a long-standing source of well-prepared and diverse teachers.¹¹ For example, despite making up just 3% of institutions of higher education,¹² HBCUs prepare 50% of the nation’s Black teachers.¹³ Further, nearly half of all Latino/a teachers with a bachelor’s degree earned their degree at an MSI. Roughly 35% of Asian Americans, 50% of Pacific Islanders, and 35% of Native Americans with a bachelor’s degree in education earned it at an MSI.¹⁴ This is a critical program that must be invested in if we are going to support a well-prepared, diverse, and stable educator workforce.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part D personnel preparation program (IDEA-D-PP) is specially designed to comprehensively prepare specialized instructional support personnel, special educators, early educators, and the higher education faculty and researchers that support their preparation. Yet funding for this program was higher in 2010 in unadjusted dollars than it is today.¹⁵ In the 2017-2018 academic year, almost every state reported shortages of special education teachers.¹⁶ Additionally, prior to the pandemic, all areas of teacher shortage, including those of special education teachers, were more severe in schools serving higher populations of students of color.¹⁷ There is an obvious and immediate need to address these shortages by investing in this program.

Together, these proposed investments will provide our country with a strong pipeline of well-prepared and diverse educators who are equipped to teach the students furthest from opportunity for the long haul. As such, we urge Congress to take the following actions for this year's budget and legislation that will enact the AFP:

- **Provide \$500 million to the Teacher Quality Partnership in the FY 22 appropriations bill and allocate \$5 billion in mandatory funding to the program over ten years through the AFP.**
- **Provide \$300 million to the Augustus F. Hawkins Centers for Excellence program in the FY 22 appropriations bill and \$3 billion in mandatory funding to the program over ten years through the AFP.**
- **Provide \$400 million to the IDEA-D-PP the FY 22 appropriations bill and \$4 billion in mandatory funding to the program over ten years through the AFP.**

2. Make Access to Comprehensive Educator Preparation Affordable

One barrier in the development of a well-prepared, diverse, experienced, and stable educator workforce is the high and rising cost of comprehensive educator preparation. Research shows that college students' potential debt burdens influence their career decisions, making them less likely to pursue a career in education¹⁸ where teachers earn about 20% to 30% less than similarly credentialed professionals in other fields.¹⁹

More than two-thirds of those entering the education field borrow money to pay for their higher education, resulting in an average debt of \$20,000 for those with a bachelor's degree and \$50,000 for those with a master's degree.²⁰ Further, the high cost of college and the burden of student loans disproportionately impacts students of color.²¹ Data from the National Center for Education Statistics reveals that 91% of Black students and 82% of Latino/a students who prepared to teach took out federal student loans, compared to 76% of White students.²²

Service scholarship programs that help cover the cost of comprehensive educator preparation are found to be effective for the recruitment and retention of teachers when, among other important features, they cover all or a significant amount of the cost of preparation and are well-designed and implemented.²³

Created in a bipartisan manner through budget reconciliation in 2007, the TEACH Grant program is our country's national teaching service scholarship. The TEACH Grant provides a maximum award of about \$4,000 in aid per year to undergraduate and graduate students who commit to teaching a high-need subject in a high-poverty elementary or secondary school for four years. Unfortunately,

while the cost of comprehensive preparation continues to rise, the TEACH Grant's award has not been increased since it was created; instead, it has been cut annually. The program has also been stymied by poor implementation that newly adopted regulations seek to remedy. The program would also benefit from increased oversight and accountability by the Department of Education for the loan servicer that implements the program.

We are pleased to see that the Biden-Harris Administration has focused on improving the TEACH Grant Program. As such, we urge you to double the program's award, expand the program to early educators, and reform or eliminate the loan conversion penalty. We ask Congress to take these actions in either the FY 22 budget or legislation that will enact the AFP to enable more and diverse candidates the ability to afford comprehensive preparation.

3. Support New Teachers through Mentoring and Veteran Teachers through Leadership Opportunities

Effective and experienced teachers have the knowledge and expertise to support their colleagues but often lack access to formal opportunities to serve as leaders. One way to leverage these expert teachers is to have them support new teachers by facilitating professional learning and serving in mentorship and coaching roles.

Once teachers are in the classroom, it is critical they continue to receive support and targeted professional learning, as this plays a key role in novice teachers' decisions to stay in a school or the profession altogether. The jump from preparation to practice is formative for the beginning of an educator's career. The research shows that new teachers who were well-mentored by experienced teachers were twice as likely to remain in the classroom as those who did not receive mentoring. However, according to analysis conducted in 2016, only 16 states have dedicated funding for teacher induction programs.²⁴ Funding for teacher leadership programs will help build the capacity of novice teachers and provide expert teachers the opportunity to serve as mentors and in other leadership roles in the school community.

As such, we support investing \$4 billion over ten years in legislation that will enact the AFP to support empowering teachers to serve as leaders – including but not limited to serving as mentors to beginning teachers – as outlined in the proposed “Expanding Opportunities for Teacher Leadership and Development program.” New teachers and the entire school community can benefit from the knowledge and skills that experienced and effective teachers have. This program will help more schools tap into this benefit.

4. Underwrite the Cost of Obtaining High-Need Certifications and Certifications Associated with Greater Effectiveness

Students of color and students from low-income families are more likely to be taught by teachers who are uncertified and inexperienced. Department of Education data show that in the 2020–21 school year alone, 43 states reported shortages of math teachers, 42 of science teachers, and 44 of special education teachers.²⁵ Shortages also persist for teachers of world languages and bilingual teachers.²⁶ Financial support for certifications in high needs areas would ultimately enable improved teaching quality for students who are otherwise taught in larger classes or by substitutes and teachers hired without preparation.

Students also benefit from having teachers who are able to obtain advanced certifications that are associated with greater effectiveness, like National Board Certification (NBC). Board certification has enabled tens of thousands of experienced teachers to remain in the classroom while receiving greater recognition, increased compensation, and leadership opportunities. Local educational agencies also use National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) as mentors to novice and struggling teachers.²⁷ Recent research demonstrates that NBCT mentors accelerated student learning gains of mentees' students by over six months compared to students of novice teachers mentored by non-NBCTs.²⁸ Helping novice teachers obtain the skills necessary to be successful in the classroom also helps reduce teacher turnover, which is a factor that contributes to underserved students being more likely to be taught by inexperienced teachers. Further, several studies have shown that teachers who become nationally certified are, on average, more effective teachers than non-NBCTs with similar experience.²⁹ Supporting cohorts of teachers to earn NBC can also serve as an effective school improvement strategy.³⁰ However, despite the benefits of having fully certified teachers in high-need subjects and with advanced certification, the cost of certification (nearly \$2,000 per candidate for advanced certification) can serve as a barrier for teachers who are willing to work to earn these certifications.³¹

Given the growing body of research across states showing that teacher qualifications matter for teaching quality and student achievement,³² increasing the number of teachers with certifications in shortage areas and advanced certifications is a key strategy for supporting student learning and closing equity gaps.

As such, we urge Congress to create the “Answer the Call – Supporting In-Demand Credentials for Teachers program” as outlined by the Administration and fund it at \$3 billion this year through legislation that will enact AFP. This fund will help teachers earn additional credentials in high-demand subjects and advanced certifications that are associated with greater effectiveness.

On behalf of civil rights, disability, parent, student, community, and education organizations advocating for all students to have access to fully prepared and effective educators, thank you for your consideration of these recommendations. We urge you to act boldly and expeditiously on these recommendations designed to close opportunity gaps in student access to a well-prepared, diverse, experienced, and stable educator workforce. Please do not hesitate to reach out to the Chair of the Coalition for Teaching Quality, Sarah Pinsky (spinsky@nbpts.org), for additional information.

Sincerely,

AASA, The School Superintendents Association
ACTFL
Alliance for Quality Education
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
American Federation of Teachers
ASCD
Association of American Colleges and Universities
Californians for Justice
Californians Together
Center for Learner Equity
Council of Administrators of Special Education
Council for Exceptional Children

Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU)
Higher Education Consortium for Special Education
Institute for Educational Leadership
Learning Forward
National Association for the Education of Young Children
National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Board for Professional Teaching Standards
National Education Association
National Center for Learning Disabilities
National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)
National Down Syndrome Society
Partnership for the Future of Learning
PDK International
Public Advocacy for Kids (PAK)
Public Advocates
Rural School and Community Trust
State Higher Education Executive Officers Association
Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children

cc:

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Senate Majority Leader
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
S-230, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
H-204, The Capitol
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- ² Cardichon, J., Darling-Hammond, L., Yang, M., Scott, C., Shields, P. M., & Burns, D. (2020). *Inequitable opportunity to learn: Student access to certified and experienced teachers*. Learning Policy Institute.
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