D.C. STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION TESTIMONY

PRESIDENT & WARD 6 REPRESENTATIVE DR. JESSICA SUTTER

"Teacher and Principal Turnover & Retention in the District and Bill 24-355, 'Statewide Data Warehouse Amendment Act of 2021'"

October 25, 2022

Good morning, Chairman Mendelson, Members of the Council, and staff. My name is Dr. Jessica Sutter, and I am the President and Ward 6 Representative of the D.C. State Board of Education (State Board). I am pleased to be here today on behalf of the State Board to provide testimony on both teacher and principal retention and Bill 24-355, *Statewide Data Warehouse Amendment Act of 2021*[1].

I would like to start by thanking you for holding this hearing on two important topics in education—the retention of teachers and school leaders and the importance of publicly available state-wide data. Ensuring students across D.C. receive a quality education requires the retention of talented educators and school leaders. Since 2018, the State Board has prioritized the issue of teacher retention through several reports, surveys, advocacy efforts, and the introduction of the very legislation being discussed today. Over the years, one focus of the State Board's advocacy on teacher retention has been to push for better and more publicly accessible teacher data; such data would allow policymakers to identify teacher retention and attrition patterns in schools and both within and across local education agencies (LEA), and to develop solutions that address both system-wide issues and individual LEA needs.

In October 2018, the State Board published a report titled *Teacher and Principal Retention in Public Schools in the District of Columbia*[2]. This was the first report of its kind to compile information on teacher attrition rates in the District at the school, LEA, and state level. At that time, the State Board found that on average, nearly 25 percent of teachers were leaving public schools annually and that the rates substantially worsened as the proportion of students designated at-risk at a school increased. Subsequent reports were published in 2019 and 2021[3], finding similar average annual rates (though the DC Public Schools (DCPS) rate has trended downward slightly over the last few years).

The State Board has been pleased to see that much more attention has been paid to the issue of teacher and school leader data since the release of the State Board's reports. This only underlines the need for the information required in Bill 24-355 to be made publicly and annually available, eliminating residents' and stakeholders' onerous task of manually entering data from Performance Oversight documents or filing Freedom of Information (FOIA) requests.

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[1] https://lims.dccouncil.gov/Legislation/B24-0355
[2] https://sboe.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/sboe/publication/attachments/SBOE%20Teacher%20Turnover%20Report%20-%20FINAL.pdf
[3] https://sboe.dc.gov/page/teacher-retention

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The purpose of Bill 24-355 is to ensure that the data relevant to understanding the nature of teacher attrition and retention across the District's public schools is available annually and publicly. The State Board has revised the bill since its previous introduction, to address feedback from both the Chairman and the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) and to remove any role for the State Board in annual reporting. The legislation amends the *State Education Office Establishment Act of 2000* to require OSSE to publicly and annually report data relevant to understanding teacher retention and attrition in the District, including information on teachers' professional experience, years serving at their school, demographic data, type of credentials held, and which teacher preparation program they completed, if any. Such data would allow school leaders and policymakers to identify teacher retention and attrition patterns, and to develop solutions that address both system-wide issues and individual school needs.

Over the past few years, OSSE has improved its data collection and public sharing of teacher data, especially with its 2022 Educator Workforce Report[4], which shared data on all educators across each of the District's 70 LEAs in the 2021–22 school year, as well as going beyond what the U.S. Department of Education (USED) has done in terms of tracking "changers" and "movers". OSSE has also provided school leader and paraprofessional data, and insights into the District's educator preparation provider (EPP) pipeline[5]. I would like to thank OSSE for their recent presentation on the 2022 Educator Workforce Report at our September 7 Working Session, as well; the presentation was a very helpful overview and an opportunity for members to engage and ask questions directly of OSSE and this workforce data.

While this is a move in the right direction, much teacher and principal data remains—to this day—unavailable to the public and provides only a snapshot in time. The State Board advocates that, as OSSE's data sets grow, OSSE provide the public with year-over-year data that would support analysis of longitudinal retention rates for educators. Such multi-year, public data would also enable informed action to address issues of teacher and principal attrition.

A lack of publicly available data makes it difficult to understand the extent and impacts of teacher attrition, its disproportionate effects on students designated at-risk, or how to best design action to address this District-wide problem. Bill 24-355 requires OSSE to submit an annual report with school-, LEA- and state-level data to explain why teachers decide to leave the teaching profession, as well as determine the number of unfilled vacancies that remain at the beginning of a school year and the dependence on long-term substitute teachers in classrooms.

The State Board believes legislation is necessary because of the importance of the data to families, schools, LEAs, and the District as a whole. OSSE's 2022 Educator Workforce Report does not provide the desired transparency and accountability needs of District residents. For example, the OSSE report covers the District as a whole, but lacks disaggregation by sector, LEA, or individual

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[4] https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/page_content/attachments/2022%20DC%20Educator%20Workforce%20Report_FINAL.pdf
[5] https://osse.dc.gov/page/dc-educator-workforce-data

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school. At the State Board's September 7 Working Session, members asked for better disaggregation of OSSE's "DC leader" data, such that this category is inclusive of principals, assistant principals, or other school leaders/administrators responsible for overseeing the operation of a particular school—and better disaggregation of this group would allow policymakers to understand specific leadership retention challenges. And, while the spreadsheet accompanying OSSE's report offers a breakdown of LEAs and schools, it only provides teacher gender, ethnicity, and retention data (e.g., the number of teachers who left a classroom position for another type of educational position, the number of teacher vacancies, etc.).

To further analyze these differences and in preparation for this hearing, the State Board's Teacher Practice and School Support Committee invited Mary Levy, an education finance lawyer and from whom the State Board commissioned its reports on teacher turnover in 2018, 2019, and 2021, to make recommendations on how to strengthen OSSE's teacher data collection and reporting[6]. The State Board reviewed Ms. Levy's suggestions and included several in our unanimously approved SR22-9, *"Recommendations Related to Strengthening Teacher Retention and Workforce Data."* I ask that Council review our full resolution in advance of passage of this legislation, but I will summarize a few key recommendations related to data collection now.

The State Board recommends that OSSE should plan to collect and share:

- Data elements in the proposed Statewide Educational Data Warehouse Amendment Act that are not currently included in OSSE's metrics, such as type of educator credential, educator state of residence, the number of teachers who left their employment to teach in other states, and more[7]
- Mid-year educator departure rates
- Educator experience, certification, and in-field teaching
- Unfilled positions
- School leader data to distinguish school principals from other school leadership roles

Finally, the State Board recommends that data collection of all kinds needs to be better integrated, with consistent definitions and formats to eliminate duplicate requests from multiple entities and to avoid placing undue collection burden on teachers and principals.

With the passage of this bill, OSSE will share annually updated data that will shed light on multiple education equity issues including the state of the teaching workforce in the District, the distribution of high-quality teachers across wards, the long-term impacts teacher attrition can have on our school system, and a better understanding of students' experiences in their classrooms.

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[6] Levy, M. (2022, July 12) *Teacher Practice and School Support Committee Meeting*, Virtual
https://www.dropbox.com/sh/wg8dj44jg9ajdk5/AADfBoiCau4AiSoRCzNrZ9lna/2022/2022-07-12-Committee%20Meeting-Teacher%20Practice%20and%20School%20Support?dl=0
[7] See a full list of data elements proposed by the State Board but not included in OSSE's 2022 Educator Workforce Report and accompanying flat file in the appendix.

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In closing, the State Board is grateful to the Council of the District of Columbia for holding this hearing today to consider B24-0355, *Statewide Educational Data Warehouse Amendment Act of 2021*, revised more than a year ago. The State Board asks Council today to review Ms. Levy's recommendations, which I previously enumerate and that are included in a tabled-appendix, and consider updating B24-0355 to incorporate them before adopting the legislation to improve the state of data on teachers and principals in the District.

I want to thank the Chairman and Council for this time, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

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APPENDIX

Data Element	Disaggregation	Collected or shared by OSSE (Currently or in future data releases)	Location (Report or Flat file)	Notes
Teachers, listed by school, using their unique identifier, including substitute teachers that are utilized within a single school building more than 30 days per quarter;	By school	No	N/A	
Demographics of teachers in a school building (Age, Race/Ethnicity, Gender, State of Residence)	By school and individual teacher level	Partial	Flat file	Missing age and state of residence
Total years of experience for each teacher in whole numbers	Individual teacher level	No*	Report	Not shared at the individual teacher level, but shared at the **city level**
Type of educator credential	Individual teacher level	No	N/A	
The name and type of teacher preparation program completed by each teacher	Individual teacher level	Yes*	N/A	It appears that this data is collected but not publicly shared. The report includes the percentage of novice teachers supplied by a DC EPP for SY 2020-21.
The number of teachers who left the profession without remaining in the field of education and the reasons for teachers leaving the profession;	By school, LEA, and citywide	No*	Flat file*	The flat file includes "number of teachers who left the public education workforce." This would not include teachers who went to teach in the private sector.
The number of teachers who left their employment to teach in other states	By school, LEA, and citywide	No		
The number and destination of teachers who left their employment to work in another school in the District of Columbia, including nonpublic schools	By school, LEA, and citywide	Partial	Flat file	Missing destination (i.e. it does not share whether a teacher changed sectors such as from traditional public to public charter, public charter to traditional public, public charter to private).
The number of teachers who left a classroom position for another type of educational position	By school, LEA, and citywide	Yes		
The average percentage of teachers who left in each category above over a five-year period.	By school, LEA, and citywide	No		
The number of teacher vacancies	By school and LEA	Yes		