

Thank you for hearing from me and my colleagues today and next week. My name is Patrick Gordon, I am in my fourth year as a teacher, but second-year as a First Grade teacher and the Varsity Track and Field coach at Windsor Schools in Windsor, VT. I am a resident of Hartford, VT with my soon-to-be-wife, Jessica, who is a Middle School English teacher. Needless to say, my career, my extra-curricular activities, and my personal life mean that I am an educator from dawn to dusk and no hour to the next is the same: I go from teaching first graders how to use addition within twenty to solve real world problems to helping high schoolers reach for their dreams through athletics, and end my day on my couch having deep, intellectual conversations about education with my fiancée.

I appreciate the work that you do for Vermonters each and every day. This is a great opportunity to hear from those of us who are there for students daily and it should happen more often. I know that in two days you cannot hear each of our unique concerns and learn enough to make the difficult decisions that you have to make. I know that Governor Scott's proposal to level fund education will come up numerous times each legislative session as long as he is governor, and I know that without the appropriate funding, we could not do our jobs.

The students we have in our schools are increasingly complex, and these students require increasing supports and educational experiences to meet the educational expectations. In the eyes and minds of those outside of education, the adequate funding seems to have been exceeded long ago. However, it is because of the unique worldly problems that we encounter each and every day in our student's lives that we need more resources to support them now. The opioid crisis and increased poverty rates are challenging educators in ways that may never be truly understood. I could share dozens of stories in the recent weeks about my experiences with students who are struggling with adult problems in their young lives.

One example of many is the story of a hard-working, curious learner who I have had the pleasure to teach during my short career. She came from a concerning home life where both drug addiction and poverty had impacted her ability to come to school ready to learn, I do not mean only her ability to learn academics, but also social and emotional skills. We organized as many school-based and community-based interventions and supports for her and her family it was with these supports that the situation began to improve. This shows what a well-funded, wrap-around system of both school-based and community-based supports can do for students who experience adult problems in their young lives.

We need an increase in the appropriate resources now, or we risk failing our most difficult students who come from the most difficult situations. Schools are the best entrance of supports for a young person's life and their family, and I find that they come to us ready to accept those supports.

The lack of adequate funding creates a system in which teachers are not feeling supported. I am a young professional in the education field, and I know of numerous

instances which demonstrate how we have not been supportive of our young professionals. The U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Educational Statistics released a report entitled, "Public School Teacher Attrition and Mobility in the First Five Years" which found that 17% of teachers with under five years of experience do not return to the profession. We have to do a better job to support our teachers nationally and in Vermont, and this will not be done through level funding. The proper supports will lead to teachers feeling supported which will make them stay, but right now the job is too difficult and there are too many other opportunities out there for Vermont to keep good teachers. Creating experienced teachers only benefits the system and the lack of support for education does not benefit our students.

My colleagues and I will be there doing what we see is best for the young humans charged to us. I hope to look up and see each of you standing with educators as we rise to the challenges and meet the unique needs of each of our students. Please consider finding more avenues to support our students, our families, our teachers, and our communities through the educational system in the coming years.