

Thank you to Chair Conlon, Vice Chair Quimby, and members of the committee. My name is Patrick Halladay, and I am the Director of Educator Licensure for the Department of Education at the University of Vermont. We greatly appreciate your request to hear from so-close to UVM education graduates to learn from their insights on educator preparation and Vermont schools. I want to join in honoring their work but also provide a bit of perspective on their journey.

The entirety of these students' lives in which they have been cognizant of the wider world has been defined by instability and pessimism. Since entering middle school a decade ago, cultural, political, and actual wars have been the water in which they have swum. They were pre-teens during the Me, too movement and in high school during the Black Lives Matter movement; they have only known poisonous and divisive politics, at least at the national level; they were in eighth grade when the Parkland shooting occurred and seniors in high school during Uvalde, and witnessed multiple fatality shootings at Michigan State, Virginia Commonwealth, University of Virginia, Brown, and Tuskegee, among others, during their college careers; they've know conflicts in the Ukraine, and West Bank, and, now, Iran; they deal daily with social media pressures and have been present at the advent of generative AI; they have seen generational inflation and assume a hamburger costs \$15; they were sophomores and juniors in high school during the COVID pandemic; they have only known the existential threat of global climate change.

And, yet, they have chosen the aspirational profession of teaching. When they have every reason to give up on hope, they opt to help students learn and learn to be good citizens. I commend their faith in education.

Teaching, of course, is not the only noble profession, but like their peers across the UVM College of Education and Social Services and Nursing and Health Sciences, they are choosing service over fame and riches, a decision that does not reduce tuition costs.

While you all understand Vermont's budget challenges much better than I, I do want the committee to be aware of investments other states have made in students dedicating their college careers to becoming teachers.

Pennsylvania offers a \$10,000 stipend to student teachers (and \$2,500 to their mentors) to offset lost income during their internship semester. This school year, 2,300 student teachers received this stipend in exchange for a commitment to teach in Pennsylvania for three years upon graduation. The 2026/2027 budget expands funding by \$5M to \$35M.

Michigan has both a program where education preparation students can receive a \$10,000 grant in both their junior and senior years and \$10,000 stipend (on top of the grant) during student teaching, again, in exchange for a commitment to teach in Michigan.

And Vermont previously supported the Teacher Forgivable Loan program where students could have up to \$16,000 per year forgiven for each year they committed to teach in a Vermont public school. The fund was quickly expended, and I know of at least two UVM students who only were

able to stay in school their senior year and complete their degrees due to the program. Both are now Vermont teachers.

Vermont has waived the \$1,200 Peer Review fee for five years. While this is of great help to Peer Review candidates, this fee is often the only cost to these candidates, many of whom are also remunerated as full-time employees; there is not commensurate support for students in traditional education preparation programs.

And the need is great. Thanks to a generous funder, UVM has three \$1,000 scholarships available annually to support students during their student teaching internship. Roughly half of our 150 annual program completers apply every year telling stories of high rent, unsustainable health care costs, food insecurity, and rising fuel prices.

Teacher shortages persist as evidenced by high numbers of provisional licenses. With an aging Vermont population, and lowest-in-the-nation birth rates, attracting and retaining students who address this shortage, build careers and lives in Vermont, and sculpt good citizens needs to be a state priority.

Thanks again for your time and seeking out the compelling stories of the students.