

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to share our position on teacher compensation. Research verifies and common sense surely tells us that the most important resource in our public schools is the teachers and staff. It is commonly pointed out that employee salaries make up the bulk of public education's budget. This makes common sense as well. There are 690,000 students in our public schools and they deserve the highest quality and best teachers and staff that we – South Carolinians can provide.

Our testimony today will concentrate on providing our children just that- the best and brightest teachers and staff in every school. Our children deserve no less.

For many, many years teacher pay fads have come and gone. In the late 80's and 90's South Carolina had teacher's merit pay. Two options were available for districts to choose from; one a campus model and one an individual model. After a few years of these merit pay schemes disappeared. Why? One they did not cause any increases in standardized test scores, and two, the cost of the merit pay plans became more than districts and the state wanted to pay.

For example, approximately three years ago Richland One tried a pay for performance plan. The District quickly abandoned the plan after only one year because the program cost the district three times the projected cost. It also caused a major disruption within the school district, impacting teacher and staff morale. In some cases, pitting teachers, school boards, administration and staff against each other.

Research has determined that paying teachers a bonus based on student performance does not improve the achievement of those students.

A pay-for-performance study released by Vanderbilt University and the RAND Corporation followed nearly 300 Nashville Public Schools fifth- through eighth-grade teachers from 2007 to 2009. The result? No overall effect on student achievement across the entire treatment group.

According to Matthew Springer, Executive Director of Vanderbilt's National Center on Performance Incentives, "We sought a clean test of the basic proposition: If teachers know they will be rewarded for an increase in their students' test scores, will test scores go up? We found that the answer to that question is no."

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This study is not alone. In June 2010, the Mathematica Policy Research study found that a merit pay pilot program for teachers that began in Chicago schools in 2006 had no effect on student achievement. According to the study, merit pay did not improve student standardized test scores or teacher retention – two main goals of the program paid for with a \$27.5 million federal grant.

The one goal that incentive pay can achieve—and one that The SCEA supports—is to attract teachers to hard-to-staff schools. Paying a bonus to teachers who agree to work in our poorest areas would increase the number of applicants in those districts.

Finally, let me say that there is a proven way to improve educational outcomes in South Carolina: raise the minimum starting salary to \$40,000. There is extensive research showing that the effectiveness of the teacher is the single most important factor in student learning. If South Carolina schools are to attract and retain the most effective educators, they must offer a professional starting salary to attract them.

A report by the international research firm, McKinsey & Company, entitled “How the World’s Best School Systems Come Out on Top,” identifies high beginning teacher salaries as one of the chief factors that differentiated top-performing school systems from their less effective counterparts.

The state has every reason to support professional teacher salaries. Districts that pay less cannot attract as many applicants for their teaching positions. In these districts, teachers of math, science, and technology can be extremely difficult to recruit. In reality, the lower the salary a school district offers, the more uncertified subject matter teachers are in the classrooms of those districts. Having a high and uniform starting salary makes all districts competitive.

Approximately, 50% of teachers leave the profession in their first five years of teaching. Many leave because they are attracted to other professions paying more with much less responsibility and time commitment. Paying a bonus to a few teachers while at the same time not having the impact on student performance is counter intuitive to solving the problem. The problem appears to be attracting and retaining highly trained, competent professionals. To do this there must be a competitive salary. That is why The SCEA supports a starting teacher’s salary of \$40,000. This will impact the issue of teacher quality, teacher retention and student performance.

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So before we dive into the same old tried and failed ways again, let us give consideration to making a fundamental change. Let's move to increase the starting salary for teachers to help overcome the retention issue of our younger teachers. Let's get serious about addressing the inequities in our hard to staff schools and begin a program of salary equalization bringing the lower paying districts up to the higher paying districts.

Of course to do this South Carolina needs an equitable, broad and stable tax policy. A tax policy which does not show favoritism to certain people or groups, a tax policy with the goal of providing stable, adequate and equitable funding. This policy would lead to better economic growth and development, greatly enhance our public education system and make South Carolina a better place for all of its citizens.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I appreciate your time and consideration.