

Members of the Senate Education Policy and Finance Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in regard to SF 2861. The Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB) oversees the state standards required to be a licensed teacher in Minnesota.

We acknowledge the severity of the substitute shortage and have been working with legislators and administrators for three years to find solutions. Section two of this bill includes many ways to expand access and expedite licensure applications for short-call substitutes. With minor technical changes, section 2 could address many of the concerns we hear about the shortage of short-call substitutes.

PELSB has concerns over the changes proposed in section 3 of this bill. This section would not require an individual to obtain a substitute teaching license (3-year short-call substitute license) from PELSB in order to serve as a substitute teacher in Minnesota schools.

Two concerns regarding student safety arise through section 3. First, there is no requirement to complete the 122A.18 FBI background check before an individual is placed in the classroom. Districts must complete a background check aligned to 123B.03, but this allows an individual to be placed in the classroom pending the background check. During this time an individual could work with students without any check to their criminal history.

Second, while rare, there are reasons besides criminal acts that would warrant the Board to take action against a licensed teacher. In section 3 of SF 2861, PELSB would have no authority over an unlicensed short-call substitute who acted inappropriately or placed a child in danger. This means that this individual could indefinitely move from district to district without a public record of their actions. This bill would remove any ability for the Board to hold this individual accountable for violations of ethical practice or prevent this individual from moving to a different school.

While we understand the desire to streamline districts' ability to place substitutes into the classroom, this should not come at the expense of student safety. We hope legislators will reach out to PELSB to discuss options to strengthen section 2 to meet the same outcomes while ensuring student safety.

Sincerely,



Alex Liuzzi
PELSB, Executive Director



Brian Rappe
PELSB, Chair