

# INTERIM JOINT COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

## Minutes of the 4th Meeting of the 2019 Interim

September 11, 2019

### Call to Order and Roll Call

The 4th meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Education was held on Wednesday, September 11, 2019, at 1:00 p.m., in Room 149 of the Capitol Annex. Senator Max Wise, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Senator Max Wise, Co-Chair; Representative Regina Huff, Co-Chair; Senators Jimmy Higdon, Alice Forgy Kerr, Stephen Meredith, Reginald Thomas, Johnny Ray Turner, and Stephen West; Representatives Tina Bojanowski, R. Travis Brenda, Randy Bridges, Jeffery Donohue, Mark Hart, Scott Lewis, Mary Lou Marzian, Reginald Meeks, Charles Miller, Kimberly Poore Moser, Melinda Gibbons Prunty, Steve Riley, Attica Scott, John Sims Jr, James Tipton, Russell Webber, and Lisa Willner.

Guests: Robbie Fletcher, Lawrence County Schools.

LRC Staff: Jo Carole Ellis, Joshua Collins, Lauren Busch, and Maurya Allen.

Chair Wise welcomed members and guests to the meeting. Following his welcoming remarks, he led those present in a moment of silence in remembrance of Patriot Day and those lost in the events of September 11, 2001.

### Approval of Minutes

Representative Tipton made a motion to approve the minutes as written. Senator Kerr seconded. The motion passed by voice vote.

### Child Abuse and Neglect Awareness and Prevention

Senator Rick Girdler was present with guests Amanda Underwood, teacher, Boyle County Middle School and, by teleconference, Jenna Quinn, Child Abuse Prevention Advocate. Also present were students Kennedy Aulick, Addison Woodard, and Brooklyn Rockhold from Boyle County Middle School. Senator Girdler told the committee that this topic was brought to his attention by this group of students and their work informed Senate Joint Resolution 38 in the 2019 Regular Session. Ms. Underwood explained that the students' proposal to implement a child abuse awareness and prevention education program grew from coursework performed in their extracurricular classes on leadership in Y-Club. Ms. Quinn spoke briefly about her work to end child abuse prompted by her own history

as a survivor of child sexual abuse. She said as many as one in four girls and as many as one in six boys are sexually abused before age 18. As many as 42 million individuals are living today with the trauma of childhood sexual abuse, which is great and is carried long into adulthood.

Victims are three times more likely to suffer depression, six times more likely to experience post-traumatic stress disorder, 13 times more likely to abuse alcohol, 26 times more likely to abuse drugs, and four times more likely to attempt suicide. The economy is impacted from these issues which are mostly covered by the taxpayer, averaging approximately \$830,000 per victim over a lifetime, through increased healthcare costs, criminal justice costs, and many other hidden costs. Children are predominately abused by individuals whom they know and trust, making it very unlikely that they will report the abuse. It could take years to report the abuse. Ms. Quinn said that thankfully, research indicates that up to 95 percent of child sexual abuse is preventable through proper education. If students are educated in body safety and creating open communication pathways, which are age and developmentally appropriate, they are much more likely to report abuse and get help. She informed members that Senate Bill 68 of the 2019 Regular Session was a bill to implement child sexual abuse awareness education in Kentucky public schools, and she hopes to see it make more progress towards passage in 2020.

Addison Woodard shared the story of an individual, Allison, who was abused and did not report it. She also shared statistics from several research groups that illustrated the prevalence of child abuse and the dramatic increase in dropout rates and suicide attempts by abused children. There are 22 victims for every 1000 children in Kentucky. The national average is nine victims for every 1000 children, making our Commonwealth the highest in the nation. Between 2013 and 2017, the number of child abuse victims in Kentucky grew by more than 27 percent. Every year, approximately 15 more Kentucky students per 1000 will experience abuse, and this number has steadily increased since 2013.

Kennedy Aulick spoke about the personal experience of a friend, Alex, who was the victim of child abuse from his father. She explained that friends and classmates are 10 times more likely to report abuse than the victim. Educating students on how to report suspected abuse is critical to increase reporting and stop abuse. To address fears that committee members may have about increasing false reports, Ms. Aulick said that there is a slight increase in reporting the first two years after such legislation is enacted; however, it drops off and stabilizes after that initial period. Additionally, false reports account for only two to eight percent of total reports, and little to no additional cost will result from implementation of this education which is already readily available for schools. The Catholic schools in Louisville, Kentucky, already implement a program called “Speak Up, Be Safe” that could be shared with public schools.

Brooklyn Rockhold spoke of her own experiences as the victim of child abuse from her father. She shared how her mother strove to protect her and her siblings, but abuse

occurred on mandatory visits with her father and his family. It was only after several years and increased education about the signs of abuse that she was able to fully identify her father's actions towards herself, her siblings, and her mother as abuse. Currently 28 states across the nation have some form of childhood abuse education legislation. The legislation also encourages Kentucky schools to recognize April 6<sup>th</sup> each year as Child Abuse Awareness and Prevention Day. Kentucky children deserve to know they are not alone and that child abuse is not acceptable under any situation.

Ms. Underwood shared the story of one of her students who had behavior issues and an IEP requiring special assistance. As a teacher, she knew how to assist this student for those issues, but she did not know how to recognize the signs of abuse the child was experiencing at home. Teachers have an obligation to report, but without proper training in recognizing the signs of child abuse, it is difficult to know what to report. Increasing the awareness of potential reporters and making it easier for abused children to share their stories addresses the growing epidemic on two additional fronts. Continuing the current trends, Kentucky will exceed 35,000 cases of child abuse and neglect this year. We know about the severity and the monetary costs, and we have a plan to follow which has been proven to be effective in other states. Now is the time to act.

Chair Wise thanked the students and Ms. Quinn for their powerful testimony on this critical issue facing Kentucky students.

Senator Kerr thanked the presenters for their bravery and also asked why the legislature has waited so long to address this issue. She spoke about bringing similar legislation twice before the General Assembly, once as testimony only before the committee and once before Senate leadership. At the time, leadership felt the topic was too unsavory. But as a survivor of child abuse herself, Senator Kerr is passionate about this topic and hopes to see legislation make more progress in the upcoming session, as it has bipartisan support. Ms. Underwood thanked the Senator for sharing her personal stories and agreed it has gone on far too long. Kentucky leads the nation in number of children being abused and this needs to be addressed.

Representative Willner spoke to the isolation felt by children who suffer abuse and the urgency of providing education about bodily autonomy, safety, and healthy relationships to all children.

Representative Gibbons Prunty also shared her history as a survivor of child sexual abuse and asked for the data shown during the presentation to be provided to members of the committee.

In response to a question from Representative Riley, the students agreed that Child Abuse Awareness and Prevention Day often falls during Spring Break and encouraged schools to recognize it on any day near that date when students are in school.

Representative Bojanowski said she felt April 6<sup>th</sup> may be too late into the school year to raise proper awareness. Ms. Underwood said she had worked closely with the Catholic schools in Louisville who implement the “Speak Up, Be Safe” program twice a year in their schools and provide a more intensive program in high school theology classes. She would encourage any and every school to implement an appropriate curriculum as soon as possible and as early as possible.

### **Improving Teacher Recruitment, Retainment, and Quality**

Dr. Jim Flynn, Executive Director, Kentucky Association of School Superintendents was present with Barry Lee, Director of Special Education, Casey County Schools; Dr. Robbie Fletcher, Superintendent, Lawrence County Schools; Patricia Shepherd, Superintendent, Union County Schools; and Dr. Robin Cochran, Superintendent, Washington County Schools to speak regarding teacher recruitment, retainment, and quality. Dr. Flynn stated that since April there have been over 2,000 vacancies posted on the Kentucky Educators Placement Service website, a resource used by most school districts to post and fill vacancies. Unfortunately, many of those remained open when school started. This problem needs to be immediately addressed or students will continue to suffer. The numbers of students entering teacher preparatory courses is also declining, with even more dramatic declines in completion rates for those students. This is a very rewarding and meaningful profession, but it needs a competitive salary with appropriate benefits and safe work environments. The tools and resources should also be available to teachers to do the best they can for students and to expand their own skills with professional development. Ongoing mentoring from experienced teachers and support from their administrative bodies is important to increase teacher retainment and success.

Dr. Fletcher spoke about the 20 districts he represents in the eastern part of the state. Among those, only two have all of their positions filled. In the other 18 districts, there are 63 unfilled or emergency certified positions ranging from special needs, to math, science, language arts, physical education, and early childhood. Emergency certification can only be used if there are no available certified or qualified applicants for a position. In the past 15 years, he has seen the number of applicants for an open elementary position go from 20 applicants to only two or three. Many districts are doing the best they can with what they have and are limiting options for enrichment courses, such as Advanced Placement, just to meet the needs of courses required for graduation. Other districts are resorting to online offerings in order to bring core course material to students in areas such as science and mathematics. There have also been incentives for dual credit course teachers and increased use of alternative pathways for teaching certification. Teach for America has brought a dozen teachers into his region, but only three have stayed in the teaching profession, and only one has stayed in the mountain region.

Ms. Shepherd said her districts have filled positions using largely alternative certification, with up to 28 percent of her district openings being filled with alternative

certifications. Additionally, there are also nearly a quarter of her teachers with less than four years of experience. This kind of high turnover has resulted in a very inexperienced staff and little mentorship opportunities. Working to entice any individual with a bachelor's degree into the classroom has been a key factor in closing the teacher gap. However, there have been great needs in instructional education for emergency certified teachers who have expertise but no classroom management skills. She said the district utilizes monthly training modules to bring new teachers together with veteran teachers or administration to share pedagogy and methods because emergency certified individuals do not have that delivery of education experience. She also partners with local community colleges to encourage students who are getting their associate degrees to continue into a teaching program. This and other opportunities are incentivized with scholarships and salary increases. To increase retention she would like to see an increase in salary for those teachers with higher rank and greater experience. These increases were partially funded through community partnerships and local tax increases.

Dr. Cochran spoke about also using the alternative pathways to certification in order to get teachers for even elementary physical education courses. She thanked the legislature for their work toward funding scholarships for STEM but that effort needs to be mirrored for education. It is a high demand sector as much as the other manufacturing and industrial areas targeted with the Work Ready Scholarship. She also said that using lay individuals who are not trained in teaching will also make it difficult for schools to reach the achievement goals set by the new assessment and accountability system. As a parent and an educator, she does not want her children to be taught all year by a substitute or by a computer. They deserve better and the teachers deserve to have the resources they need to help their students succeed. She spoke very highly of the Ed Rising program and its ability to encourage students to look at education as a meaningful and viable profession.

Mr. Lee said he was only able to hire a math teacher this week, six weeks into the school year. Currently, there are several openings still unfilled in both elective courses and in foundational courses. He spoke to the uncertainty of having students in the classroom with instructors who do not have teaching certificates. The individuals he is hiring are wonderful and dedicated, but they are untrained and lack skills that are necessary to do the job well. He would love to see more ways to get instructional prep courses into the schools for teachers who have been emergency certified in order to get them the best preparation they can have going forward.

Dr. Flynn said we need to change the narrative around the profession of teaching because it is foundational to all other professions. Even while debating policy issues, the career path needs to be seen as desirable. This has been done before for vocational professions, now rebranded as career and technical education. There are so many ways to attract the best and brightest to the classroom and provide the supports of mentorship and onboarding. Reducing or eliminating unfunded mandates and paperwork helps as well to increase the attractiveness of the teaching profession.

Chair Wise said this is a timely issue for all professions, but especially for teaching, because without teachers there would be no doctors, law enforcement officers, and other critical professions. Telling the stories of those coming from outside the profession and now succeeding in the classroom is a valuable tool.

Responding to questions from Representative Tipton, Dr. Fletcher said he had spoken with other superintendents from the central regions and all are experiencing dramatic declines in applicants, but rural areas do experience intense need because of low population density. He spoke of the need to recruit and hire locally or keep individuals local. The highest need is for teachers in special needs but also in the sciences and mathematics. Physical education is also a surprisingly high need area. Representative Tipton spoke to the high cost of postsecondary education and the high level of student loan debt that teachers carry. Increasing or implementing more scholarships for teaching could be a valuable tool towards teacher recruitment.

In response to a question from Representative Miller, Mr. Lee said that career and technical pathways have seen a dramatic increase, primarily due to the use of dual credit that students can use towards certifications. However, if dual credit was used more for general education courses, then the credit would be applicable toward a teaching certificate and therefore reduce the higher education cost burden for teachers. There would also be a way for students to perform their apprenticeships and job shadowing within their school system. Again, it is critical to work locally to address local needs.

Senator Meredith said there is more work to do to reduce the red tape and bureaucracy regarding the teaching profession. It is also critical to stop the narrative of there being governmental animosity toward teachers. Dr. Fletcher agreed it is vital to work together to move education and the Commonwealth forward. Senator Meredith also said it is necessary that we stop teaching students for a profession but teach them to be good people, part of which may be addressing the classroom environment.

Representative Riley spoke to how alarming the statistics are regarding teaching shortages but how it is critical that we speak of all professions, especially teaching, with kindness and respect.

Responding to questions and statements from Representative Bojanowski, Dr. Flynn said there has been a lot of talk from current teachers regarding the pension funding issue, but little actual retirement or resignation as a result. Many teachers are taking a “wait-and-see” approach. Dr. Flynn advises that the conversation be elevated and to have structure and respectful attitudes as all interested parties try to resolve the pension crisis issue.

Chair Wise said he would like to see a survey performed of students in education training programs to better understand their reasons for going into teaching. He feels it might be useful to know the reasons in order to understand how best to encourage others to enter the field.

Responding to questions from Representative Gibbons Prunty, Mr. Lee said there are some cyclical trends in shortages per content area, but right now it is a much more widespread shortage across the board. Representative Gibbons Prunty requested some more research to support that statement. She spoke to the wide amount of misinformation about teaching and about legislation regarding the education profession. Politics needs to get out of the classroom and everyone needs to be more supportive of teachers.

In response to a question from Senator Higdon, Dr. Fletcher said his district is using an online program to deliver content, however, it requires the students to be independent learners. In one instance, he has an 83-year-old volunteer who also is studying nightly in order to assist students in biology, which is a core education requirement. Use of online instruction delivery is excellent for specialized content for advanced learners, but it is not as effective or desirable for all students in core content areas. Dr. Flynn echoed that statement that virtual education is not right for every student.

Representative Donohue spoke to the difference in classroom culture among students today versus when he was a student. He encouraged the panel to look to their communities and use their understanding of the local culture to improve the image of the teaching profession and increase teacher recruitment.

Responding to questions from Senator West, Dr. Flynn said there is a single certified salary schedule that applies to all teachers across the Commonwealth. There are ways to increase these salaries, however, through the use of stipends and bonuses for things such as extra duty assignments and teaching dual credit courses. Each school board establishes the salary schedule that will be used in their district, usually based on teacher rank, but it can include the bonuses and stipends a district may use to incentivize different duty assignments. Dr. Flynn said Fayette County was particularly creative in their hiring practices to address teacher shortages. Dr. Cochran said there are opportunities to get more pay through stipends, but that comes with extra work. In order to increase pay across the board, there needs to be more base-line funding for districts.

In response to questions from Representative Brenda, Mr. Lee agreed the need for substitute teachers is even more critical than that for classroom teachers. Dr. Flynn said it is important to look at the ways to incentivize education and make it as easy as possible to get qualified, well-trained educators. Refining the pathways to certification and personalizing the education of those coming into the classroom from non-traditional pathways was strongly encouraged by the panel. Dr. Cochran also shared that her district

has offered scholarship opportunities to encourage those with emergency certification to further their teaching education.

Responding to questions from Representative Hart, Dr. Flynn agreed that letting the teachers teach and relieving regulations and high stakes assessments would help teachers as well as improving the learning environment for students. He shared that it is important to teach students where they are, but policies currently in place may have an unintended consequence of undermining teachers and preventing them from reaching that goal of teaching the whole child.

Chair Wise spoke briefly about the impact of Senate Bill 1 from the 2017 Regular Session which was a ‘let teachers teach’ bill, and is still being implemented. As a result of its implementation, some of the issues raised today may already be improving. We just need more time to see the impact of that legislation. He reminded members that the next meeting of the committee will be October 2, 2019, at 1 p.m. in Annex Room 149. With no further business to come before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 3:10 p.m.