



Teachers Are Leaders Act

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Teachers are one of the most important factors in student achievement. Unfortunately, high teacher attrition rates, which have neared 8 percent in recent years, mean that quality teachers are leaving the classroom every year. Teacher turnover is not only associated with lower student achievement, but teacher replacement costs are estimated to be \$8 billion annually, according to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future. To make matters worse, teacher attrition rates are highest in our lowest-performing schools, where students have the greatest need for high-quality teachers.

Teachers' top reasons for leaving the classroom often include a lack of administrative support, professional learning opportunities, and decision-making input. Unfortunately, the teaching profession often lacks leadership opportunities outside of working in school administration. Teachers desire and deserve a variety of career advancement opportunities to lead in their school without having to leave the classroom, according to the National Network of State Teachers of the Year.

Recognizing this, some innovative districts and states have created "teacher leader" roles, wherein classroom teachers take on additional responsibilities to address unique school needs. The *Teachers Are Leaders Act* would expand on this work by leveraging the expertise of teacher preparation programs to design and implement new teacher leader roles.

Specifically, The *Teachers Are Leaders Act* would authorize an allowable use of funds under the existing Teacher Quality Partnerships grant in the *Higher Education Act* to allow high-need schools and colleges to partner together to:

- *Create Teacher Leader Development Programs:* The locally-designed programs would create innovative teacher leader roles that directly address demonstrated school needs. In such roles, teacher leaders would carry out leadership activities such as peer coaching, addressing school climate and discipline needs, or developing new dual enrollment courses.
- *Improve teacher retention and student achievement:* Teacher leader roles have been shown to improve recruitment and retention, as well as double the percentage of teachers who would choose to work in a low-performing school, according to TNTP. In such roles, teacher leaders have also leveraged their valuable teaching expertise to improve student achievement and school culture according to New Leaders. In some cases, teacher leaders have taken on projects that have resulted in innovative solutions that have been scaled beyond their school.
- *Extend the continuum of teacher preparation and development:* The *Teachers Are Leaders Act* recognizes that teachers continue to develop beyond their first years of teaching and should be prepared to follow differentiated career paths that foster new opportunities for professional growth, increase their voice in school decisions, and improve student achievement.

The legislation utilizes existing Department of Education funds so it comes at no new cost to taxpayers.

The *Teachers Are Leaders Act* is supported by: Alliance for Excellence in Education, American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE), Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), Delaware State Education Association (DSEA), Educators 4 Excellence, International Literacy Association (ILA), National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), National Education Association (NEA), National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET), National Network of State Teachers of the Year (NNSTOY), National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), National Parent Teacher Association (PTA), National Writing Project (NWP), New Leaders, Teach Plus, Third Way, University of Delaware, Wesley College.

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