

An Open Letter to Arkansas Teachers and Support Staff from the Arkansas Democratic Senate and House Caucuses

July 18, 2022

Arkansas teachers and support staff:

We see you. We are grateful that you've dedicated your professional life to teaching, nurturing, caring for, and loving our children. There is no more important work than growing the minds, skills, and hearts of our state's future leaders. Thank you.

We are writing this letter to assure you that we are fighting for you. On August 8th, the Arkansas State Legislature will meet for a special legislative session. The purpose of this special session is to address our largest ever state surplus of \$1.628 BILLION dollars. We believe that a school salary increase should top the list of priorities.

In Arkansas, the starting teacher pay is \$36,000 a year. Many other support staff - cafeteria workers, counselors, bus drivers, custodians, nurses, librarians, and so many more - make even less. Yours are full-time jobs that often extend beyond the workday. We see how hard you work. We see that you often spend your own money to provide for your students. We see how much you care about our children.

We believe that you should be paid a salary that reflects your professionalism, skills, and dedication. That salary should enable you to support your family. Currently, low salaries for teachers and support staff in Arkansas make it tempting for you to cross state lines and grow the future leaders of our neighboring states. They have figured out your value and are actively recruiting you away from Arkansas. I'm sure most of you have heard of the billboard in Little Rock advertising Dallas Independent School District annual salaries between \$60,000-\$102,000.

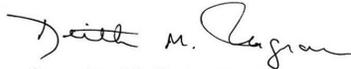
According to Department of Education Secretary Johnny Key, base salaries in Oklahoma, Missouri, Tennessee, and Mississippi are all higher than Arkansas. In fact, Mississippi just increased base salaries for teachers to \$41,500 along with an approximate \$5,000 raise for every teacher. We can do that in Arkansas.

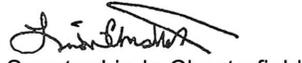
There are just over 34,000 public school teachers and 37,000 certified and classified public school staff in Arkansas. The Governor has proposed raising minimum teacher salaries from \$36,000 to \$46,000. Arkansas has the money for educator and support staff raises.

We are working to gather the votes for Gov. Hutchinson to add teacher and support staff pay to the agenda for the upcoming special session. We implore our colleagues to join us. As you teach our children daily - it's never too late to do the right thing.

Please believe us when we say that we see you. We are with you. We are fighting for you.

Sincerely,

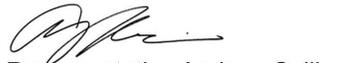

Senator Keith Ingram
Senate Minority Leader


Senator Linda Chesterfield


Senator Stephanie Flowers


Senator Larry Teague


Representative Fred Allen


Representative Andrew Collins


Representative Deborah Ferguson


Representative David Fielding

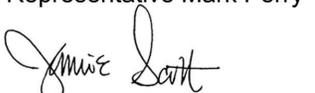

Representative Denise Garner


Representative Monte Hodges


Representative Fred Love


Representative Reginald Murdock

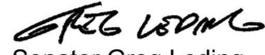

Representative Mark Perry

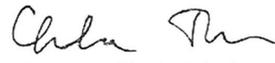

Representative Jamie Scott

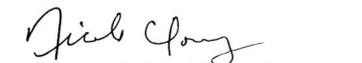

Representative David Whitaker

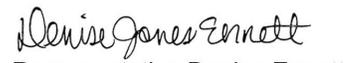

Representative Tippi McCullough
House Minority Leader


Senator Joyce Elliott


Senator Greg Leding

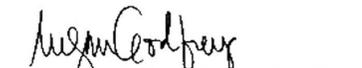

Senator Clarke Tucker


Representative Nicole Clowney

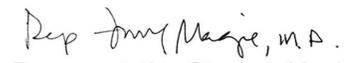

Representative Denise Ennett


Representative Kenneth Ferguson


Representative Vivian Flowers


Representative Megan Godfrey


Representative Ashley Hudson


Representative Stephen Magie


Representative Milton Nicks


Representative Jay Richardson


Representative Joy Springer

