



ILLINOIS STATE SENATE
STATE OF ILLINOIS

November 14, 2017

James T. Meeks
Chairman, Illinois State Board of Education
100 N. First St.
Springfield, IL 62777

Chairman Meeks:

Illinois public schools are facing a crisis due to a lack of teachers.

A 2015-16 school year survey conducted by the Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of School found that 75 percent of districts had fewer qualified candidates than in previous years and 16 percent of schools canceled programs or classes because of teacher shortages. Additionally, the State Board has indicated that there are currently more than 2,000 unfilled positions in the state.

Furthermore, this is not an isolated crisis that impacts a specific region of the state. At a Senate Education Committee hearing held in Decatur on November 6, we heard testimony from teachers and administrators that highlighted this issue as a major concern for districts all across the state, including urban, suburban, and rural districts.

We commend you for the effort made thus far by the State Board to address teacher shortages and for further prioritizing the issue by initiating a year of inquiry on the subject. However, this is a crisis that deserves even more urgent attention and swift action to provide crucial support to students, administrators, and teachers.

We respectfully urge the State Board to accelerate its inquiry into this matter and report findings and recommendations by March 1, 2018. This will ensure there is time for the General Assembly to craft legislation to address the teacher shortage crisis prior to the next school year.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to working with you.

Handwritten signature of Jennifer Bertino-Tarrant in cursive.

Jennifer Bertino-Tarrant
Chair, Senate Education Committee
49th Senate District

Handwritten signature of Andy Manar in cursive.

Andy Manar
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee
48th Senate District

Handwritten signature of Kimberly A. Lightford in cursive.

Kimberly A. Lightford
Assistant Majority Leader
Vice-Chair, Senate Education Committee
4th Senate District