



PRESS RELEASE

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Report: Ohio teachers make 15.2% less than similarly qualified professionals

Teachers in Ohio earn, on average, 15.2% less in wages each week than non-teachers with similar education and experience levels in the state, according to [a report from the Economic Policy Institute \(EPI\)](#). That so-called wage penalty continues to deter college-bound students from entering the teaching profession and leads to major difficulties keeping highly qualified educators in many districts around Ohio.

Policy Matters Ohio was joined by Lawrence Mishel, author of the EPI study and three Ohio teachers to discuss the study findings in a virtual press event.

“There’s been an attack on teacher pay,” Mishel said. “We haven’t been putting in the resources – something that we really need to do in order to guarantee students the professionals they need to have in the classroom. Teachers are the single most important factor in schools in determining how students will fare.”

Tati Weaks, special ed teacher in Greenfield Exempted Village Schools, said that she often keeps extra food on hand to help her students and their families make ends meet.

“The teacher wage penalty is a perennial problem for schools across the state, but especially in districts that are traditionally even more difficult to staff, like mine,” Weaks said. “Attracting highly qualified teachers to rural, high-poverty areas is particularly hard as it is, and low wages make the situation nearly impossible. Our students deserve so much better in their classrooms.”

Mandy Wagner also teaches in a rural district with the Dover City Schools. She said teachers like her with years of experience and advanced degrees often want to teach in high needs schools, but also have to pay their own bills and support their own families.

“The old adage, ‘Teachers don’t teach for the income; they teach for the outcome,’ is certainly true for me,” said Wagner. “But it’s impossible to ensure the best outcomes for all our students when teachers have to take on crippling student debt to get their teaching qualifications and aren’t paid enough to get ahead of the bills. I’ve been laid off multiple times in my career because my master’s degree, which makes me a better educator for my students, makes me too expensive to retain when budget cuts have to be made. We need real change in Ohio.”

Policy Matters Ohio Education Researcher Piet van Lier said it comes down to funding for public education. The bill to reform how Ohio funds public schools, House Bill 305, recently passed in the House but stalled in the Senate.

“House Bill 305, while not perfect, is the best opportunity we’ve had in years to make school funding more equitable in Ohio,” van Lier said. “It does a better job of taking into account poverty by including an income measure, does more to fund the education of lower-income students, and really makes an effort to figure out what it costs to educate children no matter where they live or what they look like.”

Van Lier said Ohio lawmakers have drained \$7 billion a year from public programs – including schools – by choosing to cut taxes for the wealthy and corporations instead. Music teacher in the Cleveland Heights-University Heights District Tamar Gray recently experienced the consequences of a lack of state support for public education. Teachers in her district recently went on a short strike over proposed cuts to their health benefits.

“The fact that teachers are being asked to settle, to make less, to fix budget problems on one of the most important things that can happen in the state and the nation and even the world – there is something wrong with that,” she said. “To allow people to take money from public education for vouchers for EdChoice – there is something wrong with that.”

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*Policy Matters Ohio is a nonprofit, nonpartisan state policy research institute
with offices in Cleveland and Columbus.*