

I am so sorry I cannot be there today to give you a statement in person, but I wanted to share what the Hope Street Fellowship has meant to me in the short 6 months I have been a part of it.

I think first I should mention that through Hope Street I have found a community. Being part of such an incredible and supportive cohort of educators has reinvigorated my profession for me because I am constantly inspired by their work. I have a group of strong educators outside of my school to rely on and learn from. In a profession that is so stressful, this has made a world of difference for me this school year. Being connected to the other fellows has let me see inside of classrooms all over the state, which is a rare and extremely valuable experience. Despite our school districts looking different in many ways, it is encouraging to see that we all have similar goals and purposes every day.

Through Hope Street, I have been able to see my profession from another perspective. I had the opportunity to meet with lawmakers, write part of a RISE Science test, attend the Governor's Summit on Education, and meet many people who lead our profession at the USBE. This has given me a strong appreciation of how invested Utah is in education and the ability to see how far the efforts for quality education reach beyond my classroom or school community. I have a new appreciation for everyone who works in many sectors of the education field and for the complexities of our profession on a political level.

Through Hope Street, I have become a more empowered educator. I have learned to share my voice, to speak up, and to become a more public figure in my profession. There have been opportunities that have led me to have the courage to share my narrative and write about my experiences to make broader changes in our field. I have had the opportunity to collect the voices of other educators too, and then analyze their statements for data on mentoring. It has made me a stronger advocate for my students and my profession.

Lastly, through my experience as a fellow with Hope Street, I have decided to stay. This year has been a challenging one for many of our educators state-wide, and pains me that every week another one of my experienced friends tells that they are looking for other jobs and trying to find a way out of our profession. In a year where I have 36 kids, a very high needs class with lots of kids in traumatic situations, and several extra job responsibilities, I don't feel this way. The work I do with Hope Street has made my work in and out of the classroom more meaningful and connected on a larger scope. It has helped me to love my profession again and to be excited about teaching our youngest Utahns. I believe Hope Street is unique because it has the ability to offer leadership opportunities that will aid in teacher retention.

With your support and more funding, we can spread our work further and inspire more teachers to stay and build leadership skills. Thank you for your time today and for your careful consideration to invest in Hope Street Utah.

Caren Burns
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