

Good morning, Madam Co-Chairs, and members of the committee. Thank you for having me here today.

In 5th grade I had math with Mrs. Reebe at North Elementary School in Crystal Lake, Illinois. We were doing a multiplication quiz, but the classroom window looked out toward the playground where another class was having recess. I remember thinking that I'd much rather be giving the quiz than taking it, and that's the day I decided to become a teacher.

I came to Fairbanks straight from high school to attend UAF. At the time, it was a far-away place, and I could always go home if it didn't work out. Instead, I met my now wife, earned my bachelor's degree in history and my master's in education, and have stayed here ever since. We have two sons, 4 and 7 years old, and the older one is a 1st grader at one of our excellent Fairbanks schools.

After four years of substitute teaching at West Valley High School, I had the privilege of accepting my first teaching position from Mario Gatto at Ben Eielson Jr/Sr High School as a math and history teacher in 2012.

At the end of that year, I was transferred to North Pole Middle School, where I volunteered as a Building Representative. I worked to advocate for my colleagues and, working with administration, I helped facilitate new avenues of trust around communication and policy development in our building. From this work, I learned the value of understanding perspectives before drawing conclusions, and that the most productive conversations come from a mutual understanding that all stakeholders ultimately want what is best for our students.

I joined the Teacher Rights team for the Fairbanks Education Association about 8 years ago as a way to support my colleagues across the district. My experience on rights put me face to face with the professional and ethical dilemmas that come when the person you are assigned to advocate for has been accused of something that could or did harm a student. In those moments, where I wondered if advocating was the right thing to do, I reminded myself that everyone is entitled to be heard, that everyone is entitled to due process, and that even serious infractions can create opportunities for reflection and growth.

Oftentimes, the feedback I gave to a colleague was substantially similar to the feedback they got from the District, but because it came from a fellow educator, it carried a credibility that cannot be replicated by an external agency. There is power in the shared experience of teaching and a pride we take in our work that makes educational leaders inherently responsible for setting high standards for others. The Professional

Teaching Practices Commission replicates this shared responsibility by making educators accountable to their own peers—people who, no matter where in our state, share the unique challenges and rewards of teaching in a way that is difficult to explain to others.

My experience as an advocate prepared me well for hosting three student teacher interns from UAF, each of whom I proudly work with as colleagues in our district today. Student teachers look to their mentors for permission to take risks and as an authority on ethics and best practices. The relationship only works with a strong sense of trust and honesty, which are only built in an environment of high standards where the mentor takes responsibility for the development of the mentee. Discussing a person's suitability for the profession before they've even taken their first job is an extremely difficult conversation, but avoiding that conversation when necessary is a disservice to the intern and to the profession as a whole.

I recently finished the coursework for my Type-B Administrative Certificate. My experience in a principal preparation program has informed or enhanced the way I approach every aspect of my profession. In particular, it highlighted the important role of building administration in identifying and immediately addressing unethical behavior. Schools are complex communities with intricate balances of trust, power, and interdependence. Students have to know that their schools are safe places, families have to know that their students are well cared for. Educators should not look upon accountability as a threat, we should see it as one of the most important layers of protection we have for ensuring the credibility of our profession and the mutual expectation that, in all cases, we are focused on putting the best educators in front of our students.

Thank you again for allowing me to speak to you this morning; I welcome any questions you have.