



rsaia.org

February 9, 2022

The Honorable Kim Reynolds
Governor's Office, State of Iowa
1007 East Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Dear Governor Reynolds

This letter/request is made on behalf of the approximately 150 Iowa public school district members of the **Rural School Advocates of Iowa (RSAI)**.

We very much appreciate your leadership and guidance over the past two years, as we all navigated the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout this time there have been steps taken by your administration that were designed to help our school districts find a way to educate our students, which we very much appreciate. One of these steps was to allow **paraprofessionals in school districts to act as substitute teachers in all classrooms**. I refer you to your most recent health proclamation of February 3rd, Section 9, and the corresponding Iowa Code and Iowa Administrative Code.

School districts across the state have been struggling to fill teaching positions, and continue to struggle to find substitute teachers to be able to conduct classes for students in our buildings. The exception that you have allowed for paraprofessionals has helped districts with this significantly. **If this particular exception expires on February 15, districts will be facing additional difficulties in staffing classrooms.** Ongoing unfilled vacancies, Omicron cases of COVID-19, seasonal flu, colds and other normal health issues will still be occurring, staff needing to stay home with children because of a child care issue. All of these are keeping staff at home, along with other "normal absences" for teaching staff.

While we very much understand your position of handling the current state health issues through established means, we would ask that you **consider some type of executive action or immediate directive for rule changes** so that our school districts can do their best to provide the education for our children that they deserve. We would not be asking for a permanent change, just an allowance to get our districts through **until your much needed initiative for Teacher and Paraeducator Registered Apprenticeship (TPRA) Grants** is implemented and helping us all attract and train future paras and teachers. At that point, perhaps some of the other measures the legislature has been considering will also be in effect and our staffing issues could be partially mitigated going forward.

Please feel free to contact our advocates at the Capitol if you desire any additional information or clarification on this issue. We thank you for your time and consideration of this request and hope that we can continue to work together to help our districts provide a quality education for the students of Iowa.

Sincerely,

Rural School Advocates of Iowa

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