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OKLAHOMA STATE DEPARTMENT *of* EDUCATION

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**Walters Underscores Success of Teacher Bonus Initiative
*Democrats' Fake Controversy Can Not Dim Program***

(NOTE: This version includes additional information regarding recipients)

Oklahoma City, Okla – State Superintendent Ryan Walters highlighted the tremendous success of the teacher signing bonus initiative today. The pioneering program awarded signing bonuses to 523 certified teachers hired to teach in critical shortage areas of PreK – 3 and Special Education, including a total of 117 teachers who held out-of-state licenses and chose to teach in Oklahoma. A total of 578 teachers were eligible for the program, of which 523 were ultimately awarded bonuses. Of those teachers who received bonuses, 76 percent were employed in high-poverty or rural districts.

“Innovative solutions like the teacher bonus program are the key to getting Oklahoma schools back on the right track,” said Walters. “Any fake controversy Democrats and Republicans controlled by the teachers unions try to drum up will not dim the overwhelming success of this program. Previous small-scale programs have not worked, so we had to disrupt the market clearly and decisively to invest in our high-need areas. We will continue to disrupt the status quo, introduce free market principles in our education system, and unleash to power of innovation to reward our best teachers and help our students achieve great things.”

Applicants committed to teaching for five years to be eligible for the program. As protection for taxpayers’ investment, OSDE will claw back a prorated amount from teachers who fail to fulfill that commitment. The initiative was cited by the US Department of Education as a solution for other states to follow to address teacher shortages in high-need areas.

Comments from bonus recipients give a full picture of the impact of the program on teachers and the students they serve:

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- "It was a deciding factor. I had planned to finish out my career in North Carolina, but the bonus and recent Oklahoma pay raise influenced me and changed my mind."
- "I was able to make the choice to stay in the classroom and teach, opposed to looking for a position in administration."
- "I was originally planning to stay in Texas for another 3 years while we worked on our property here and the bonus helped me make the move to Oklahoma."
- "It made my decision easier to come home where I wanted to be and still teach."
- "It just gave me confirmation from God that moving to Oklahoma was right where I was supposed to be."

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