



Teach the Arts for a Well-Rounded Education!

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**Testimony Before the House Education and Career Readiness Committee
Senate Bill 216 (M. Huffman)
Tim Katz, Executive Director
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Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair Slaby, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the House Education and Career Readiness Committee:

The Ohio Alliance for Arts Education (OAAE) appreciates this opportunity to present our comments and concerns in response to Substitute Senate Bill 216 (Huffman) the Ohio Public School Deregulation Act, which was passed by the Ohio Senate earlier this year.

The OAAE understands that the purpose of this bill is to relieve school districts of some state regulations, so that districts can operate more effectively and better address the needs of their students.

We appreciate that some of the amendments to the bill addressed some of our concerns regarding professional development requirements for teaching gifted students. We also appreciate that the proposed changes for the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES) are still included in the bill.

But we believe that some of the changes in the bill do not go far enough to address our concerns about teacher preparation and licensure. We are concerned about the potential negative impact that this bill could have on education programs and students, who deserve well-trained teachers in all their classes so that they can achieve at the highest levels.

We would like an amendment to SB216, regarding its provision to revise the grade band structure for which teacher licensure is received, to clarify that the bill does not eliminate or affect the future issuance of the multi-age, preK-12 teaching license. This is the teaching license by far most commonly held by Ohio's professional pre-K-12 educators who are assigned to teach the specific disciplines of visual arts, music, dance, or theatre/drama.

SB216 leaves this issue unclear and creates a situation in which not only teacher licensure but also pre-service teacher training programs in institutions of higher education could be significantly affected.

Another issue that our statewide board and membership wishes to have clarified is exactly what teachers licensed under SB216's proposed new preK-5 grade band will be certified to teach. More specifically: Will the proposed preK-5 license certify general educators (i.e., generalist elementary school teachers) to teach the arts (defined in Ohio as music, visual arts, theatre/drama, and dance) in the way that the current preK-3 license does? So far, we have not been able to get an answer to this question.

Currently teachers with the preK to grade three license, and those teachers with the "grandfathered" K-8 license, are considered "certified" to teach the arts under Ohio Administrative Code rules. But the course requirements for teaching the arts under these licenses are minimal when compared to someone earning the multi-age license to teach the arts. At Kent State University, for example, the only arts requirements to earn a Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood Education to teach all subjects, including the arts, in grades preK through grade three, are a 3-credit course, "Music and Rhythms in Preprimary Education," and 9 credit hours of "Humanities and Fine Arts."¹

Again, there are many implications here in the areas of pre-service teacher training in university degree programs, teacher hiring practices, and most important, the quality of teaching at all grade levels aligned with Ohio's Fine Arts Content Standards. We believe a preK-grade 5 license that allows general teachers to teach the arts would seriously undermine the quality of standards-based arts education in Ohio.

The two issues raised in this testimony may be examples of unintended consequences of SB216. But they illustrate why the OAAE is requesting that a provision be added to the bill specifying that all courses in the arts at all grade levels be taught by a teacher with a multi-age, preK-12 license in a specific arts discipline of dance, drama, music, or visual art, or an equivalent license in a specific area. A similar provision in Ohio law exists for the teaching of physical education, and this should be done for arts education as well.

The OAAE believes that teachers with the multi-age license in the arts can best provide age appropriate instruction, content knowledge, and professional expertise to guide students to achieve at the highest levels in the arts.

Thank you for considering our comments and recommendations.

¹ Kent State Course Requirement Catalog at <http://catalog-archive.kent.edu/archive/catalog/2016/eh/ug/ecde6614.html?requirement=ecde-BSE-progreq>
<http://catalog-archive.kent.edu/archive/catalog/2016/info/courseinformation/kent-core.html#Humanities>