



EDUCATION
COMMITTEE

Witness Form

Today's Date 12/5/17

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Testifying on Bill Number: SB 216

Testimony: Verbal Written Both

Testifying As: Proponent Opponent Interested Party

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Testimony on SB 216
Katie Kelly, Executive Director, PRE4CLE
Senate Education Committee
December 6, 2017

Chairwoman Lehner, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Education Committee. My name is Katie Kelly, and I am the Executive Director of PRE4CLE, Cleveland's plan to expand access to high-quality preschool for all three- and four-year-olds, with the goal of significantly increasing kindergarten readiness. I appreciate the opportunity to share my testimony on two provision of Senate Bill 2106 that we strongly oppose: the elimination of the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment and the elimination of the current teacher licensure bands.

The Kindergarten Readiness Assessment is a critical tool for us to measure the impact of Ohio's early learning investments, while also providing data to our teachers and school administrators on each child's readiness in four key areas of growth and development: literacy and math, as well as social and emotional well-being. This multi-domain approach is a critical and unique element of this assessment. While Ohio has placed much needed focus on reaching literacy proficiency by third grade, research also shows that early math and social emotional development have a tremendous impact on later achievement. Additional information on those areas are attached to your testimony. The ability to understand a child's development in all four of these key areas as they enter kindergarten provides important data to guide individualized instruction and their path to success.

I would like to address the concerns that have surfaced on this issue during this debate:

- **A concern that the KRA is adding to an overall "testing" burden for children:** The KRA is not a test, it is a developmental and cognitive assessment. Just as we assess children for hearing, speech, autism, and other early developmental markers, the KRA provides important data on how a child is developing related to critical early benchmarks of growth and learning. It does not present any stakes for children, teachers, or districts, but instead provides important information for educators and families about a child's early developmental milestones.
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- **A concern that it is not important for districts that have high overall third grade reading scores to implement the KRA:** Just as we would not recommend that children coming into districts where the majority of students are healthy forgo routine health screenings or physicals, we should not assume that all children coming into districts with strong third grade literacy are on track in all



areas of their development. Ensuring that every kindergarten student entering Ohio schools has an intentional and developmentally appropriate assessment of their growth and development is an important part of our early learning system and early detection system.

- **A concern that the KRA takes too much time in the classroom and is not useful to teachers:** You will hear today from teachers who see great value in the KRA, and make constructive recommendations on how it could be improved. Certainly we need to consider the value of teachers' time in the classroom, and develop tools that optimize teachers' ability to interact with students while also gathering these important data. As you will hear, the KRA can be a very useful tool for teachers to understand individual students, form relationships, and guide instruction. If there are changes that need to be made to strengthen this assessment, let's look carefully at those options. The KRA was developed over six years, and we are now in the fourth year of implementation. It has been refined over time in response to educator feedback, and it can continue to be improved. Teachers and families are now educated on how to use the tool to support their kindergarten students. Throwing away six years of investment, time, and training does not make sense for Ohio's students and families.

- **A proposal that every district should choose their own KRA:** The KRA is critical not only for students, but also for our state to have a uniform way of looking at our progress on kindergarten readiness as a foundational benchmark in growing the workforce we need for Ohio's future. Currently only 40% of children are entering school fully prepared to succeed. Tracing that trend allows us to see that same 40% lag behind through third grade. In other words, children who are starting behind are staying behind. Through the implantation of a uniform KRA statewide, we gain the ability to understand where we need to continue to support children and families to reach kindergarten readiness, including the impact of our state early learning investments. We also gain the ability to benchmark kindergarten readiness in one community against other communities and the state, a very important part of tracking progress.

The second issue I would like to briefly discuss, which has two parts, is the proposed elimination of the current teacher licensure band structure and the ability for Superintendents to assign teachers to grade and subjects outside of their existing licensure. PRE4CLE opposes both of these provisions for the following reasons:

1. Existing three bands of licensure that exist in current law appropriately reflects the needs of the developing child throughout their school career.
2. These three bands drive how teachers are educated while attaining their degree, specifically to respond to children based upon their developmental needs,



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including appropriate classroom management practices and curriculum that aligns with standards.

3. The proposed language in SB 216 fails to include preschool licensure in any band.
4. Allowing the flexibility to assign any teacher to any grade outside of their licensure only exacerbates the challenges outlined in the previous three points and is not motivated by what all parents want is to have the most appropriately experienced educator in front of our children.

Again, while we are sensitive to the workforce challenges facing a portion of superintendents in Ohio, we are opposed to consolidating bands or the ability to assign educators to classrooms outside of their licensure to provide flexibility in staffing for superintendents at the expense of the needs of children. Provisions already exist to allow superintendents to implement waivers to place teachers outside of their core licensure if they are able to pass the content exam in those areas. We would argue that this is a very reasonable threshold to ensure that teachers moving to a different content area have the appropriate training to be effective. If those waivers include frustrating administrative barriers than our energy should be eliminating those barriers and not policy based on decades of best practice research that is best for kids.

The Cleveland community realized we must act with urgency, intention, and strategic collaboration to address one of our greatest education challenges – school readiness. PRE4CLE is the collective impact organization working to ensure that every Cleveland child can enter school ready to succeed. Since we launched in 2014, public and private partners in Cleveland and Cuyahoga County have invested nearly \$40 million in support for kindergarten readiness efforts. A list of the private funders supporting our county and PRE4CLE efforts is attached to your testimony. These investments have helped us increase enrollment in high-quality preschool by 50%.

Cleveland is doing its part to increase kindergarten readiness, but we cannot accomplish the goal of all children being ready without the strong partnership of the state. Eliminating the kindergarten readiness assessment and teacher licensure band structure is the wrong approach for students, and we ask that you eliminate these changes from the bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on these important issues today. I'm happy to take any questions.

Early Math

From <https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/edcentral/early-math-skills-crucial-childrens-learning>:

Mathematical thinking in early childhood education helps form a foundation for general cognition and learning.

Children's knowledge of mathematics in pre-K is a strong predictor of later achievement, even into high school.

Achievement gaps in math in later grades can be traced back to the early years as children from low-income families typically have less exposure to math and, even by pre-K, demonstrate less extensive math knowledge.

From <https://www.greatschools.org/gk/articles/early-math-equals-future-success/>:

Research suggests early math skills are a better predictor of academic success than early reading skills.

"Early math skills have the greatest predictive power, followed by reading and then attention skills," reports a psychology squad led by Greg J. Duncan, in *School readiness and later achievement*, published in *Developmental Psychology* in 2007.

The more math-oriented activities kids do before kindergarten, the better they'll understand math in school. Early math skills foretell higher aptitude in high school math and higher rates of college enrollment. And a 2014 Vanderbilt study determined that for "both males and females, mathematical precocity early in life predicts later creative contributions and leadership in critical occupational roles."

"Math is the language of logic," explains Dr. Jie-Qi (Jackie) Chen, professor of Child Development at the Erikson Institute, a principal investigator of the Early Math Collaborative, and co-author of *Big ideas of early mathematics: What teachers of young children need to know*. "Math builds reasoning, which leads to comprehension," she says. "Developing a mentally organized way of thinking is critical."

Social Emotional

From <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-wide-wide-world-psychology/201701/why-child-s-social-emotional-skills-are-so-important>:

Early social emotional skills are related to how socially, emotionally, academically and professionally skilled we are later in life. For example, having higher social-emotional skills in kindergarten is related to important outcomes at age 25 (Jones, Greenberg, & Crowley, 2015). These outcomes include:

- Educational success, such as completing a college degree

- Career success, such as an increased likelihood of being employed
- Other key life outcomes, such as being less likely to have problems with the police

Social-emotional skills help children to persist on challenging tasks, to effectively seek help when they need it and to be thoughtful in their actions.

Importantly, social-emotional skills can be taught. This was highlighted in a large review of research on social-emotional skills in 270,034 students in kindergarten through 12th grade (Durlak et al., 2011). The review found social-emotional learning programs in schools not only improved social-emotional skills, but also increased positive attitudes toward school, positive social behavior and academic performance. These programs also decreased the likelihood of kids getting in trouble or experiencing emotional problems.

From <http://www.childrensacademyonline.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Importance-of-SEL-In-Early-Childhood-Devt.pdf>:

Healthy social-emotional development in young children correlates with healthy cognitive development and therefore creates a strong foundation for future school achievement.

“The foundations of social competence that are developed in the first five years are linked to emotional well-being and affect a child’s later ability to functionally adapt in school and to form successful relationships throughout life.” -National Scientific Council on the Developing Child

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- Piet van Lier, Executive Director, Cleveland Transformation Alliance
- Nicole Vitale, Curriculum and Instruction Manager, Office of Early Childhood, CMSD
- Susan Wagner, Flexible Content Expert, CMSD
- Marianne Wolf, Manager of Special Education, Preschool Department, CMSD
- Sajit Zachariah, Ph.D., Dean, College of Education, Cleveland State University

“UPK 2.0” Private Funders Pledge \$12.5 Million!

- Audrey and Albert Ratner
- Bruening Foundation
- Cleveland Browns Foundation
- Cleveland Cavaliers
- Cleveland Clinic
- Cleveland Foundation
- Dealer Tire, Inc.
- Eaton Corporation
- Forest City Enterprises
- Char and Chuck Fowler
- Gary Oatey
- Huntington Bank
- Jewish Federation of Cleveland
- Jill and Paul Clark
- KeyBank Foundation
- Lubrizol
- Medical Mutual of Ohio
- Mt. Sinai Health Care Foundation
- PNC Bank
- St. Luke's Foundation
- The George Gund Foundation
- Third Federal Foundation
- Treu-Mart Fund

together we ignite young minds



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