

Chad J. Shawger
Superintendent

Kimberly S. Downs
Treasurer

December 11, 2017

Dear Chair Lehner, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Education Committee,

My name is Chad Shawger, and I am the superintendent for the West Muskingum Local School District in Zanesville. I am writing in support of SB 216 and wanted to share a personal story about how the licensing change included in SB 216 is a positive for local school districts.

I was hired at West Muskingum in 1997 fresh out of college to teach Social Studies at the high school. My major was secondary education with minors in History and Geography. At the time, the state department issued licenses in secondary education with a 7-12 grade band stating you could teach any Social Studies in grades 7-8 and only your minors in 9-12. The people that graduated a few years before me had licenses that read comprehensive Social Studies 7-12 and the people that graduated a couple years after me had licenses that read Integrated Social Studies. Both of those licenses allowed them to teach all Social Studies in classes 7-12.

In a rural school district, such as West Muskingum, it was often necessary to teach multiple subjects because of the funding issues and the inability to hire additional staffing to specialize in one specific class. After teaching World History, U.S. History, and Government for nine years, I was told that I wasn't highly qualified to teach Government and I would have to go back and take classes. As I remember talking to the other three members of the department, they all had comprehensive or integrated licenses and, therefore, could teach any Social Studies. I took multiple Political Science classes in college, but not enough to qualify for a minor. When I talked to each of my colleagues, they stated they hadn't taken nearly as many classes in Political Science or anything else for that matter, because the colleges had changed the number of classes to get the secondary degree. So, in reality, I wasn't certified to teach Government because of the time period I was in college, and not because I didn't have the right classes.

I was almost finished with my Masters in administration and didn't have the funds to get a second Masters, although I wasn't sure I was ready to leave the classroom just yet. So, what was the district to do if I said, "I can't afford to take more classes to be considered a Highly Qualified Teacher (HQT)?" West Muskingum is a victim of the state funding formula and couldn't afford to hire another teacher, and so I made it easy and took an administrative job in a different district.

With the passage of SB 216, a local superintendent would be given the autonomy to justify why an educator should be allowed to teach a particular class in a subject area. As Senator Huffman asked, "Is a local superintendent in the best position to decide if a fourth grade teacher is able to move down to third grade?" My answer will always be "yes." Local superintendents know their districts' needs much better than anyone at the Ohio Department of Education.

This is just one example of how SB 216 benefits school districts such as West Muskingum and is a step in the right direction to give local school boards control of what they were elected to do.

Respectfully,

Chad Shawger, superintendent