

House Education Primary and Secondary Education Committee

HB 322 – Proponent Written Testimony

May 20, 2020

Jamie Thompson, Preschool Intervention Specialist at Steubenville City Schools

Chairman Jones, Ranking Member Robinson and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to provide proponent testimony in support of HB 322

I am a preschool intervention specialist. I teach students three to five years old. I love being a preschool teacher because I get to help build a foundation of learning for my students. For most of my students, I am the first teacher they will ever get to experience and often the first person outside of their family who they will spend time with. Being able to watch them explore their curiosity, become creative, and develop their own personalities are the highlights of each school year.

I am finishing my eighth year of teaching. I went through my third year of RESA when it was still five tasks. However, I remember that time like it was yesterday. I had been moved to a new building that school year. I was getting used to a class of three year olds instead of four/five year olds. Trust me that one year of development can be a world of difference to teach. Within the first month of school, I worked with three different paraprofessionals. I remember sitting at my desk the morning it was time to film tasks one and three wondering if my students would wear clothing that had our school label on it. Would I have to tell a three year old that he/she had to change clothes or put tape over their shirt? What would I do with the kid whose parents didn't sign the permission slip? Would he listen if I sent him to another teacher? Would that mess up his routine for the day? Then I thought of all my three year olds' routines. They weren't used to having a camera watching faces and every movement in the classroom. Also, would we have to start the video over because of the phone ringing or an unexpected announcement over the intercom or a visitor who didn't see the sign not to come in? If we had to start over, how would that affect my three year olds? They can only sit for so long before they start to fidget. I had two kids with the same first name that year. We weren't allowed to say last names. How was I supposed to call on these students?

Those were all the thoughts racing through my head and it wasn't even 8:30 a.m. yet. You know what I would have rather been doing that morning *and* what would have been of more benefit to my students? I would have rather been getting ready to finger paint to show their creativity or explore the insides of a pumpkin to ignite their curiosity or to play restaurant with them to help develop their skills working with others. These are all developmentally appropriate activities for a three year old. Instead, do you know what I was teaching that day?

Well I don't know either. The lesson wasn't that memorable, but it matched all the points on the rubric. The hands-on, developmentally appropriate activities I would have rather been doing, that fit with best practice and pedagogy, unfortunately did not line up with the rubric. Instead of being encouraged and confident in my teaching, I felt defeated. Instead of reflecting on how I could improve and deepen learning, I was left exploring how to best stifle real learning to fit into limited rubric and on a tiny screen.

I'm not the only person who has felt more detriment than benefit due to RESA tasks. In my district, many educators start out teaching preschool for a year or two before they are moved to another grade. With this happening, many educators get moved to a new grade the same year they are to complete year three of RESA. On top of learning a new curriculum, they now need to show that they are experts in teaching it, and they need to prove that expertise to a complete stranger, and they only have 20 minutes to prove it.

Instead of making us prove ourselves to strangers in 20 minutes or less, give new educators what we really need: quality mentorship. Invest in Ohio's teachers becoming strong and confident educators by making sure that all districts have high quality mentoring programs for the first two years of teaching. My mentor for my RESA program was great at helping me fill out paperwork, but it was not meaningful and relevant to what I was going through in the classroom. If the focus of the program were solely on mentorship and not getting to the video task, my mentor may have felt more empowered to focus on authentically mentoring me, not just the paperwork to show I was ready to videotape myself in year three.

I am asking you to make this change to the Ohio Teacher Residency, specifically to eliminate years three and four and especially the video task, in order to create a mentorship program that all of Ohio educators can be proud to be a part of, a program that will encourage and further develop the strong and confident educators that our students deserve.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for your consideration. I am available to respond to any questions you may have.