

As the Executive Director of the Ohio Association of Pupil Services Administrators (OAPSA) and an Executive Board member of the Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities (OCECD) I am providing testimony for the Subcommittee's consideration for the meeting scheduled for March 16, 2017.

Prior to Ohio's current operating budget, preschool funding was based on "units". Essentially there were half-time units and full-time units in terms of state support with the obvious outcome that a full-time unit would receive twice the level of funding as half-time units. During the development of IEPs for preschool students, districts could make determinations on the amount of service to be provided based solely on the child's need. For example, a student with mild or moderate needs would benefit from being placed half-time (morning or afternoon) because that was thought to be appropriate for the degree of the child's needs. Funding for that child would be based on "half" of unit funding. However, for a child with more intense needs, the IEP team could designate services to be delivered full time (full day rather than half day) because that was the appropriate level of services. A child in a full-time preschool program would receive the full unit funding for that child (twice what a half-time student received).

During this current biennium budget, however, "unit" funding for preschool programs was eliminated. In its place, the budget provides for "per-pupil" funding at a specified amount for each preschool child, along with a "weighted" formula which is based on the K-12 special ed funding process. What is missing in this current funding pattern is that there is only one amount for each preschool child; no longer is there recognition as to whether the child is in preschool "half-time" or "full-time". What this current funding formula essentially says is that a district IEP team could choose to have a preschool child in a program half-days or full-days but they would get funded essentially at the lower amount. In reality, it is much more expensive for a school district to provide a full day of preschool service than a half day. What we definitely do not want to happen is for IEP teams to make placement decisions that are affected by funding; instead, decisions should be based solely on the level of the child's need.

I strongly encourage the Subcommittee to take action to correct this inequity in preschool program funding so that a child placed full-time based on the significant level of his/her needs is funded at twice the level as a child placed in a half-time preschool program based on the more mild-to-moderate need level. Thank you for your consideration.

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