



MECHANICSBURG

EXEMPTED VILLAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Danielle Prohaska,
Superintendent (ext. 1402)
Scott Maruniak,
Treasurer (ext. 1403)

11/7/17

Dear Chairperson Lehner, Vice-Chair Huffman and members of the Ohio Senate Education Committee:

My name is Danielle Prohaska, and I am the superintendent for Mechanicsburg Exempted Village Schools in Champaign County Ohio. Mechanicsburg serves roughly 880 students per year and is a small town, rural district. In most cases, our teachers are singletons, being the only person teaching their area of content.

It is my pleasure to submit written proponent testimony on behalf of Ohio Senate Bill 216. In my fourth year as a superintendent, I am extremely encouraged by the collaboration, communication, and common sense enveloped in this bill. As superintendents, communities, regions, and organizations, we are sharing our collective voice for the betterment of the students and districts we serve.

There are several reasons why I support the passage of SB 216. First and foremost, SB 216 begins to address the excessive amount of regulations that have burdened public education in Ohio for far too long. SB 216 provides a voice to districts, allowing for local control so that we can best meet the unique needs present in each and every school district and community across the state. Finally, SB 216 provides a common sense approach to education, putting the needs of the students and communities at the forefront of what we do!

I would like to share with you three specific reasons why I support the affirmation of SB 216:

1. Teacher Licensure in it's current form is constructive and misaligned, which creates staffing issues for districts across the state. In Mechanicsburg, we have had 3 high school science teachers since I became the superintendent in 2014. Prior to that, 4 high school science teachers in 7 years. Turnover has been largely a result of the licensure requirements required for higher level science courses, specifically chemistry and physics. Chemistry and physics, which would require an integrated science license to teach both, are few and far between in the application pool. As well, the requirements for supplemental licenses in these areas are so overwhelming, that current science teachers may need to take up to 36 additional credits to even qualify for the initial supplemental license. The current licensure structure makes it impossible for districts to hire staff with the credentials needed to be considered highly qualified. If the district has a teacher with a science license and feels that he/she would be the best person to teach those courses, the superintendent should have the authority to assign staff to best meet the needs of the district. Mechanicsburg currently has a teacher who has produced strong data and positive student interactions, however, he is not qualified to teach his



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assigned courses due to the restrictions that licensure creates. When speaking with ODE, they suggested we find another teacher or reassigned courses. Teacher licensure must change!

2. Teacher Evaluation should be about feedback to support teacher growth, as research has proven that the impact of a great teacher has more impact than any other factor. The teacher performance rubric, which accounts for 50% of the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES), has produced great discussions between building principals and teachers in Mechanicsburg. It has fostered collaborative learning and improved teaching and learning practices. All of this has happened in spite of the Student Growth Measures (SGMs) side of the OTES. SGMs are misplaced, using data to punish or inflate rather than stimulate discussions around instructional strengths and opportunities. Student growth measures are not a comparison of apples to apples and are an unfair representation of the teachers that serve Ohio students. I ask you to support the elimination of the SGM portion of OTES and affirm the recommendations of the Teacher Evaluation Committee that convened during the 2016-2017 school year.
3. Testing and Assessment will continue to be a topic of advocacy, but we are moving in the right direction with the elimination of social studies assessments for 2017-2018 school year. SB 216 will further support alignment in testing, allowing the option for paper-pencil testing on state assessments. Though we need to continue to grow our digital citizens, online assessments are not appropriate for all ages, especially our younger students facing high stakes consequences associated with the 3rd Grade Reading Guarantee. It is important to remember that not all students progress and develop at the same rate. Please honor this and allow districts to provide paper-pencil testing for students that may need to show what they know in that format.

I sincerely thank you for your time and ask you again to affirm SB 216 on behalf of all Ohio's students, communities, and school districts. Please feel free to contact me if you would like to discuss this matter in more detail.

Yours in Education,

Danielle Prohaska, Superintendent
Mechanicsburg Exempted Village Schools