



EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Witness Form

Today's Date December 12, 2017

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Organization Representing: Public Education-Mid-East Career & Technology Centers

Testifying on Bill Number: SB 216

Testimony: Verbal Written Both

Testifying As: Proponent Opponent Interested Party

Are you a Registered Lobbyist? Yes No

Special Requests: _____

Chair Lehner, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Sykes, and Members of the Senate Education Committee:

I would like to thank each of you for taking time to read this written testimony. While I am in support of SB 216 in its entirety, I feel compelled to share my point of view on the proposed changes to teacher licensure related to the expansion of Grade Bands. As I follow the conversations and testimony related to this issue, I believe that it's necessary to share my thoughts based on my many years of experience.

First, I currently serve as a public school superintendent and have over 30 years in education. I have served as a classroom teacher at multiple grade levels; as an elementary principal; and then as a superintendent for the past 10 years. Since I have spent my entire career in rural districts in Southeastern Ohio, I totally support the proposed changes to Grade Bands. The proposed language in SB 216 will allow local superintendents greater flexibility in addressing difficult staffing issues. High-quality teaching will actually improve by allowing effective teachers to be placed in other grades outside of the current Grade Bands. Being a holder of multiple licenses myself, my success in the positions that I had was due to going through a very effective teacher preparation program and my ability to relate to and develop relationships with students regardless of their grade level. As part of the teacher preparation program that I went through many years ago, I was taught strategies to learn new content and to stay current with instructional best practices to meet the needs of students. The proposed changes to Grade Bands are more than reasonable. If a teacher has been adequately trained, he/she will have the ability to effectively meet the needs of the students that the proposed Grade Bands will allow.

In recent testimony against SB 216, the comment was made that a first grade teacher would not be effective at the high school level. The comment is almost laughable as it is clear to me that is not the intent of the Grade Band change. I can cite many instances in which a third grade teacher would make an excellent fifth grade teacher but the current Grade Bands do not allow this to happen. The expansion of the Grade Bands would allow this scenario to take place.

Another comment that I believe to be quite concerning was the blatant lack of confidence being placed in the hands of school superintendents to make staffing decisions. Who would know better about the skills that their teaching staff members possess than the administration of that particular district? To be honest, I am personally offended by this particular point that was made by the educational leader of our state. I have nothing but the utmost respect and confidence in my colleagues across the State of Ohio to make staffing decisions that are in the best interest of the students they serve.

Next, I cannot find any credible research that supports the notion that quality of instruction improved when the Grade Bands that currently exists were implemented. Again, the proposed change in Grade Bands creates an avenue for greater flexibility for districts to meet staffing needs and to more effectively meet the needs of the students.

Additionally, another relevant example is the Highly Qualified Teacher (HQT) criteria that was first implemented in 2002. This created another flaw in the system in that it caused situations where teachers were licensed/certificated but not highly qualified. This made no sense to me from its inception because of the disconnect between the Ohio Department of Education and higher education institutions. I can cite multiple instances when I would interview teacher

candidates for employment, and they had not been made aware of the need to be a highly qualified teacher by the university they attended. To me, this means there was little to no communication between the Ohio Department of Education and the higher education institutions. How can a disconnect be so evident if being a highly qualified teacher was needed to be seen as an effective teacher? If HQT was really a game changer, wouldn't higher education be more effective in meeting the needs of prospective teachers of the future? Much like the current Grade Bands, there is a disconnect between teacher licensure and what the characteristics are for being a good teacher. A good teacher who understands content and has been properly trained to learn new content and relate to young people can be an effective teacher...even if the Grade Bands are changed to what is proposed in SB 216.

In closing, I again thank you for taking time to read this written testimony. The proposed change will provide the flexibility needed at the local level to place highly effective teachers in grade levels to best meet the needs of the students that they serve.

Respectfully submitted by:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard A. Hall". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Richard A. Hall, Superintendent
Mid-East Career and Technology Centers