

Newcomerstown Exempted Village School District



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

My name is Jeff Staggs and I am the superintendent of Newcomerstown Exempted Village School District. I am writing in support of Senate Bill 216. This legislation will remove mandates that require unnecessary time and effort on the part of school district staff, improve the amount of time we can devote to student instruction, and will help school districts operate more efficiently. The changes that are recommended in SB 216 improve many aspects of education. The bill will provide flexibility during a time of teacher shortages in certain subject areas and geographic areas of Ohio. The bill will give school districts the flexibility to place highly qualified and experienced staff members in our greatest areas of need.

One example I would like to share is about how the current licensure system has handcuffed teachers and superintendents from putting the best people in front of students. In 2014, we hired a young lady to teach sixth grade social studies. She was clearly the best candidate that we interviewed and came highly recommended. The only problem was that her license was for Integrated Social Studies 7-12. I had a decision as superintendent, do I hire the best candidate and hope she can get a supplemental license or hire a candidate that had the license for sixth grade who wasn't the best suited for the job? I decided to hire the best person to put in front of my students in Newcomerstown.

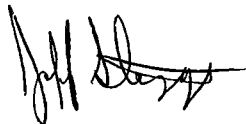
What different social studies class does a student in college take that would distinguish a sixth grade social studies teacher from a seventh grade social studies teacher? The answer is there is no such class. This lady and the district had to jump through numerous hoops of the current licensure program for her to teach one grade lower. She was granted a supplemental license which forced her to take six hours to renew and another six hours to obtain her 4-9 alternative license. The twelve hours were required in reading for her to teach a grade lower than her current license. The year previous to her employment at Newcomerstown, she was a full-time substitute for Title One Reading. The Ohio Department of Education did not give her any credit for teaching Title One toward her twelve hours of reading. I asked this teacher, "Are you a better social studies teacher because of those twelve hours than you were before you took the classes?" Her answer was she fulfilled the requirements by the state so she could keep

her job (The cost for those twelve hours was over \$6,000). She absolutely didn't learn anymore about social studies in the process. I'm proud to say that by hiring the best candidate to put in front of my students we scored an 80.6% this past year on the state social studies test (similar districts scored 64.7%, and the state average was 64%).

I support the licensure language that is being proposed and strongly disagree with previous testimony that the superintendent is not the most qualified person to determine where to put the best teachers so students succeed (but someone in Columbus who has never met my students and doesn't know their background, their parents, or the data that we collect on each student - does know?????).

I encourage you to pass SB 216. If I can answer any questions or provide you with additional information, please contact me.

Yours in Education,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Staggs". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Jeff Staggs

Superintendent Newcomerstown Exempted Village School District