

**Ohio Senate  
Education Committee  
The AMOS Project  
Bianca Edwards  
Wednesday, December 6, 2017**

Good Afternoon Senate Education Committee Members,

I am Bianca Edwards, Community Organizer for The AMOS Project in Cincinnati, Ohio. Thank you for the opportunity to connect with you today and I apologize for not being able to be there in person.

I am writing to you today as a parent of a young child and member of The AMOS Project. As a parent of a young child I am very interested in ensuring that my child has the access and opportunity to engage in the best education possible to follow her dreams and contribute to her community as she grows. This includes keeping myself abreast of the changes and challenges to assessments in our education system and the impact that those changes can have. This is how I became aware of SB 216. I recognize that I am blessed to have these resources and tools to negotiate for a quality education system for my child and also recognized the educational and social injustices/disparities that exist in our systems. It became clear to me a long time ago that this isn't an opportunity that all of us have and that many of the children in these systems, through no fault of their own, don't have access to the quality programs that prepare them for the experiences they will have when they enter kindergarten.

In 2016 AMOS was part of the thousands of individuals that stood behind and passed Preschool Promise. The AMOS Project registered around 47,000 voters in Cincinnati in that year alone because we acknowledged that "quality" wasn't an option for many parents, that centers deserved to have the opportunity to invest in their center staff development and that if we truly believed in strong communities that it was up to each of us to fight for it. That all of our children deserve to thrive from the moment they are born. I am proud to say that last year we all passed Issue 44 by over 60%. I say all this to say that I believe SB 216 is not in the best interest of our children, programs or teachers.

One of my biggest concerns is the proposal that SB 216 would eliminate the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment, which is something we know helps establish a baseline of the skills and abilities our children have when entering kindergarten. I

see the KRA as another step in how we achieve equity and quality for our children. We have to acknowledge that not all of our communities and centers receive the necessary resources and supports for low-income children and that this is increasingly true for neighborhoods where there are larger populations of children of color. The KRA is an extremely useful tool that shows this disparity when we look at the data, especially when we look at the impacts on our lower income and African American Children. Their scores are lower than their counterparts. There should be no reason that those in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods have a difference of 20 - 25 percentage points on the KRA. When the KRA was developed it was determined to be the most useful for our children, teachers, schools, state department and policymakers in consideration of both its administration and ability to help guide teachers in how to instruct their students. Getting rid of this assessment would be detrimental to the success of our children and teachers.

Having friends that are trained educators has also given me insight into the challenges this bill presents. This bill would permit a superintendent to employ a licensed teacher to teach a subject area or grade level for which they are not licensed. If a teacher is not licensed for a specific age group then they are not prepared to meet the developmental, social or emotional needs of those children. This would cause further disparities in kindergarten readiness and allowing this is not in the best interests for our children. Early childhood education sets the foundation that our children build off of, if they aren't prepared from an early age, we have already failed them. The KRA also reflects the standards in all essential areas of school readiness including language and literacy development, cognition and general knowledge (including early mathematics and early scientific development), approaches toward learning, physical well-being, motor development and social and emotional development. If this bill is enacted all of Ohio will lose its ability to identify these strengths in our children and their needs. Our teachers deserve to be prepared to successfully manage the classroom that they step into and this proponent of the bill would take that away, and teachers face enough challenges.

Our local area neighborhoods and communities are supporting each other and "stepping up" in ways they never have before. We have a different understanding of the importance of early childhood education and we cannot afford to cause further harm to our families by enacting this bill.