I am writing with a testimony for the Senate Finance Subcommittee K-12 Education Hearing for the Week of May 22, 2017.  I am a year three Resident Educator Summative Assessment (RESA) participant, and it have strong convictions about the effect this program has had on my first three years of teaching.  Let me begin by saying that teaching is my second career.  I spent 13 years practicing respiratory therapy in an Ohio hospital, providing critical care and life-saving measures on countless patients.  I operated ventilators, bipap and cpap machines, and worked more Codes than I can count on a two-year associates degree with very little orientation.

With that being said, I went back to school to pursue a career in education.  I graduated from Ohio University in 2014 with a Baccalaureate in Early Childhood Education.  I then added a 4/5 endorsement to my degree in 2016.  I will receive a master's degree in reading in six weeks, yet I have not yet been passed the required RESA tasks in order to obtain my professional licensure to be a teacher.

Within the last three years, I have taken part in the Resident Educator program.  The first two years were manageable and required me to think and reflect on my actions as an educator.  It was also nice to be assigned a mentor to go to with questions.  However, this year, the RESA was insane.  I wish there were another word to describe it, but it was was quite ridiculous.  The RESA required me to ask such things of my kindergarten students as to "ignore the camera".  Little minds at work learning are going to be distracted by a camera in their environment.  In addition to the camera, I spent countless hours creating assessments that were not realistic to the learning standards set by the state of Ohio or by my district.  I had to ask my students, who were unable to read yet, to self-assess.  This is something usually done in a discussion, but the RESA required that I submit evidence.  This created more stress on my little learners.

This was my first year in a new district in a new grade.  Therefore, while I am learning to teach this new grade and learn the ropes of new district, I also was trying to effectively cover every square inch of a rubric so that whoever scores my RESA will think I am a good teacher based on a few forms and under 30 minutes of video.

I have completed the RESA now.  I am awaiting my scores.  I also completed and passed edTPA in college.  I have two degrees and am quickly approaching a master's but my fate as an educator rests in the hands of the person who scored my assessments for RESA.  I also had two informal and two formal evaluations by my principal this year.  I have been evaluated many, many, many times.  In all of the evaluations I have been through, I feel the RESA is the least effective.  If I pass, I will not know why or how well I did.  If I fail, I will receive no feedback.  Therefore, I will be guessing at how to pass next year.

I feel that assigning a mentor is a good idea for new teachers.  It gives them permission and time to ask questions and receive feedback.  However, I feel that the RESA is no help at all.  I feel it provides undue stress on teachers who are learning their way anyway.  It is not a secret that a first year teacher will not be as good as a third year teacher.  We all learn from our experiences.  Teaching is a day to day profession in which we must learn from our colleagues as well as our mistakes.

I feel the RESA prohibited me from doing my best work as a teacher this year.  It took time and energy away from my students that they deserved to have.  They deserved their teacher to be present in class instead of worrying about losing her job.  They deserve creativity and dancing and songs, not working to fulfill a rubric and hiding from a camera.

I have already completed the RESA.  I am praying that I pass so that the torture will end for me as well as my students.  I am pleading with you to make this go away.  Allow teachers the time to grow in their first three years instead of spending their third year in fear that they'll never teach again.  Assign a mentor, implement goals to reach, have a mentor observe, just eliminate the need to jump through hoops, because that is exactly what RESA is.

In addition, save the money!  Educopia is making millions off of this!  No other state in the U.S. sees the need to do both RESA and the teacher evaluations.  It's overkill!  Please give new teachers the joy of teaching again!  Thank you for your time!  I look forward to seeing outcome of this current situation.

Blessings on you during this hearing!

Sincerely,

Katie L. Brammer