

Dear Ms. Lieberman and Senator Sykes,

My name is Sean McCullough and I have been an educator for nine years, the last five as a special education teacher in the State of Ohio. Unfortunately, my dream of being a teacher may no longer be a reality as I was unable to pass one of the five portions of the RESA assessment. After acquiring two bachelors degrees, volunteering countless hours on behalf of my district's, fundraising money to sustain academic and athletic programs, and receiving "skilled" on my OTES evaluations, I feel that the short video portion of RESA and its grading rubric is not an accurate representation of my full ability to teach the youth of Ohio. Having just been offered a two-year contract by my district and gaining approval from my principal throughout the academic year, I feel that my services are at minimum sufficient for where I work. Additionally, I led our Quiz Bowl team to a top sixteen finish at the National Academic Championship in Washington D.C., successfully coached our track and field team, and had a co-worker use my classroom for observation and research to acquire her Masters in Special Education.

As you already know, June 12 was a tremendous step closer to mending our broken hearts. RESA will remain eliminated as the Senate agreed to the House language, however there are flaws that need to be fixed to help keep teachers and individual school districts from being affected. Any law has 90 days to pass until it becomes official. Unfortunately, in education that puts the date of the actual law being enforced well into the 2017-2018 school year. This will greatly affect both school districts and individual teachers.

For my fellow teachers and I, that would mean not being able to be hired full-time until the month of October. Our individual school districts must terminate our employment based on RESA's law that states that any teacher with a four-year license is only eligible to become a long-term substitute. Teachers affected by this will lose their OEA, health, and STRS benefits.

That would mean that individual school districts would need to start the hiring process during late July into early August to find teachers to replace proven staff members that have a minimum of five years in the teaching profession. These educators are well versed among their student population and are members of a community that help their area grow. School districts will then have to hire long-term substitutes during this 90-day period only to potentially replace them with the teachers who were originally lost due to the RESA program. This can create instability in the classroom and stunt student growth.

My concern comes with a solution that benefits all parties involved. Instead of enacting a law in 90 days, make the elimination of RESA effective immediately. If RESA is eliminated and this amendment is proposed on the current bill, teachers can retroactively gain their licenses back by applying on June 30 or after July 1 of the 2017-2018 academic year. This will ensure that people like me, who potentially have to go into the remediation year, will have a full-time license to teach. This ensures our school districts will not have to look for new employees to replace the teachers they will lose to this program.