

OHIO HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

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HB 322 – Proponent Testimony

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Good evening Chairman Jones, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the House Education Committee. My name is Isabel Bozada-Jones and this is my fifth year teaching elementary school at Herbert Mills STEAM Elementary in Reynoldsburg, Ohio.

I am speaking as a proponent of House Bill 322, which eliminates the Resident Educator Summative Assessment, or RESA, and instead creates a two-year Resident Educator program focused on mentoring and professional development. An educator with a Resident Educator license can then apply for a Professional Educator license upon completion of this two-year program designed to support early career educators.

HB 322 would support new teachers and their students by eliminating the RESA, an unnecessary assessment that takes away valuable time and attention from teaching and learning. I love my students and their families and I spend every day working hard to ensure that they have what they need to live the future they deserve. But students do not benefit when new teachers must divert their focus and energy to completing time-consuming tasks on the RESA.

When I began my first year teaching third grade math, I was assigned a mentor who was an experienced teacher and mentor in my building. My mentor was a consistent presence in helping me to plan and stay on track. She walked me through report cards. She came into my classroom the week before my first observation to do a mock OTES observation with me. She met with me every single week for my entire first and second year of teaching, helping me to reflect on my practice, share helpful tips, and center all of the work I was doing around having the most impact on the students that I was entrusted to educate.

Unfortunately, not all teachers receive strong mentoring in the form of instructional support because districts feel pressure to restructure mentoring programs around completing the RESA tasks. Many districts are forced to divert limited resources away from high-quality instructional mentoring so that mentors can instead spend time preparing teachers for a needless assessment that takes away time from teachers doing what they do best-- teaching. Instead of receiving the thoughtful and transformative mentoring that I received, new teachers are often supported by mentors that must focus on guiding them through meaningless RESA assignments in the hopes it will help them pass the RESA.

When I entered my third year in the classroom, the RESA loomed over everything I did. The summer prior to that year, I had been a part of a group of new educators within the

Ohio Education Association called Ohio's New Educators (O.N.E.) that organized to eliminate the summative assessment. Emily Russ, who is testifying today, started a petition to eliminate RESA that received over 6,000 signatures in a week. We followed the petition with a survey to find out more about what educators across the state were experiencing. The results were overwhelming. We received 1,000 responses, each its own story of how the RESA had negatively impacted students and teachers.

For example, one teacher taught students in a high needs special education setting. Many of these students were not able to functionally communicate with the world around them or who were fighting for their lives every single day, but the teacher had to explain their highly specialized work on questions geared towards general education teachers. Another teacher was rated 'Accomplished' on the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System, but after three failed attempts on the RESA, was forced out of the classroom. Yet another teacher had her entire assessment thrown out because she had a kindergarten student who was wearing a soccer jersey with his name on it. There are so many more examples like these. It is time to listen to Ohio's educators and eliminate the RESA.

When I recorded my video for RESA, I planned for weeks. My beloved mentor was not allowed to help me with this part, so I was on my own. I thought about which lessons would fit the best on a video, which 30 minutes of my teaching would be evidence of my passion, commitment and skill as an educator. Instead of doing the creative, engaging, collaborative activities I normally would do, I did a whole group lesson where there wouldn't be too much background noise that might prevent an audible recording of my teaching on the video. Then came the additional work of completing other aspects of the assessment. I spent hours re-watching the same video of myself, writing and rewriting answers, thinking about what would ensure that I got to keep doing the job that I love. Instead of planning for my students, taking extra time to connect with a parent about their child, or working to improve the lives of those in my community, I was instead losing this time by doing the RESA, just like thousands of other educators have been forced to do in Ohio.

I support House Bill 322 because it eliminates the RESA, but very wisely retains the most important part of the current Resident Educator Program- the mentoring and professional development. This bill frees up teachers to spend their time and energy in the most impactful ways for their development as educators and their service to students. Once again, when teachers focus their energy on the RESA, it benefits neither the teacher nor their students.

With House Bill 322, we have an incredible opportunity to change what it is like to be a new teacher in Ohio. I appreciate the work of the bill sponsors and the committee members in addressing this important issue.

Thank you for your consideration. I am available for any questions you may have.