

House Education Primary and Secondary Education Committee

HB 322 – Proponent Written Testimony

May 20, 2020

Emily Schwappe, 1st Grade in Reading Community City Schools

Chairman Jones, Ranking Member Robinson and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to provide proponent testimony in support of House Bill 322. My name is Emily Schwappe and I am a sixth year teacher who teaches first grade at Reading Community City Schools in Reading, Ohio. Reading is a small district filled with talented students, supportive families, and a dedicated staff.

The 2016-2017 school year was my third year of teaching, otherwise known as my RESA “performance year.” I worked tirelessly on four performance tasks, which at that time included preparing and recording 2 video-taped lessons. After submission, an individual who did not know me, my students, my teaching philosophy, or our school culture would evaluate a 15 minute video-taped lesson and determine if I demonstrated “teaching proficiency and readiness for a professional license.” I did not want to mess this up.

The preparation for my first video included answering questions, making sure my lesson could meet the requirements for the highest rating, and becoming familiar with the “Avoid Disqualification” list. The list contained obvious things to avoid such as submitting videos without sound or re-using video evidence from a past submission. It also stated that a video with any personally identifiable information (PII) would be disqualified. *Okay, that’s fair*, I thought to myself. *My students will have to put their name tags away, we can deal with that for one lesson.*

However, we were further advised that PII included: **my name**, my **school name**, students wearing **attire with our school name** and/or our **school mascot** - all should be avoided in your video-taped lesson. The question was raised, “*What do we do if a student is wearing a shirt with your school name on it?*” We were guided to simply tell the student to go to another room for the duration of the lesson or have them turn their shirt inside out.

The week before my lesson I sent letters home to caregivers outlining the procedures, requesting consent, and reiterating the fact that students should not wear any “identifying information.” I spent two hours after school the day prior preparing materials for my lesson as well as removing anything that said my name, my students’ names, and any traces of our Blue Devil mascot.

Despite my proactive efforts, the next day one of my first graders walked into the classroom in a shirt with the words “Reading Blue Devils” and a big Blue Devil on it. Panic ensued and I remembered what we were advised to do. I didn’t think it was fair nor authentic to have them leave my room during our lesson so I explained to the student they would need to head down to the nurse to turn their shirt inside out and come back to the classroom.

In that moment, two things happened. The first was my little first grader, who I honestly had never seen shed a tear, looked up at me and burst into tears. The second, a fire rose through me. What was being imposed on me was now impacting the *emotional well-being* of this little first grader. It was no longer

about me and I knew RESA needed to change because I was not growing as an educator and my students were in no way benefitting from this.

Although RESA has changed dramatically since 2017, House Bill 322 would eliminate years 3 & 4 and the focus would be on two crucial ways that **will** foster growth of educators: high-quality mentoring and professional development. Currently, years 3 and 4 remain to be an inauthentic assessment which neither supports the professional growth of a new educator nor does it create a positive impact for students. It takes educators away from planning engaging lessons, collaborating and learning from colleagues, participating in professional development and taking time to connect with families.

I ask you to act now to help support educators and what we need to better ourselves as professionals, the profession itself and, most importantly, the students we serve.

I am grateful for the efforts of the bill sponsors and the committee members to address this issue.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for your consideration.

Emily Schweppe