



Senate Education Committee

Senate Bill 388 Written Testimony

December 8, 2020

Chair Lehner, Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Senate Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony to you today regarding Senate Bill 388.

My name is Shelly Vaughn and I am the superintendent of the Mercer County Educational Service Center. Our organization employs substitute teachers for the six school districts in Mercer County. I am writing as a proponent of SB 388 as it permits a school district board of education to employ an individual as a substitute teacher according to the district's own educational requirements for the 2020-2021 school year only. The bill also declares an emergency, which would allow this legislation to provide immediate help for school districts.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, Ohio's school districts were starting to experience a shortage of certified classroom substitutes. I'd like to share some data from Mercer County to support this. During the 2011-2012 school year, Mercer County ESC employed 246 substitute teachers. More recently, these numbers have decreased:

2017-2018: 187 substitute teachers

2018-2019: 175 substitute teachers

2019-2020: 155 substitute teachers

The impact of the Coronavirus has obviously made a difficult situation even more challenging. To date, Mercer ESC employs 103 active substitute teachers. An already shallow pool of substitutes has been further depleted because many substitutes have decided to sit out this school year. There are 41 substitutes that are on our list but have not actively worked this school year. We are operating at nearly half capacity than that of three years ago.

All school districts in Mercer County continue to deliver instruction full-time in person and one of the biggest challenges they are facing is having enough substitutes to fill in for teachers who are gone for an extended period of time because they have the virus or are being quarantined because they were in close contact with someone who has the virus. During the month of October, there were 204 substitute teaching positions unfilled and 245 unfilled during the month of November. Building principals, school counselors and other district staff are filling these gaps, making them unavailable to attend to their primary duties and responsibilities.



Typically, a substitute must hold a bachelor's degree along with a substitute license issued by the Ohio Department of Education. SB 388 allows a local board of education to determine the requirements for substitutes that will be used for the rest of the 2020-21 school year. However, the bill specifies that a substitute teacher employed under the bill must be of good moral character, as prescribed for licensure, and must submit to a criminal records check and not have a record of disqualifying offenses for school employment, as required under continuing law.

SB 388 would help to resolve substitute issues for school districts, like those in Mercer County, as we seek to deliver instruction in the most appropriate manner for our students and our communities. I encourage committee members to act swiftly on SB 388 to provide this much needed relief for Ohio's schools. Thank you for your time.

Shelly Vaughn
Superintendent
Mercer County Educational Service Center