

Senate Education Committee
Senate Bill 388 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 speak to you today regarding Senate Bill (SB) 388. My name is David Larson and I am superintendent of the Miami County Educational Service Center (ESC) in Troy, OH.

I am writing as a proponent of SB 388. SB 388 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.

Most of the schools in Miami County have successfully navigated in-person learning options for our students despite the many challenges associated with COVID-19. The Miami County ESC and our partner districts are committed to providing the very best learning opportunities we can during the global pandemic. The Miami County ESC coordinates substitute teachers for Bethel Local Schools, Covington Exempted Village Schools, Miami East Local Schools, Milton-Union Exempted Village Schools, Newton Local Schools Piqua City Schools, and the staff at the Miami County ESC. Those districts, along with the other districts in the county, are all experiencing a huge shortage of substitute teachers.

Although all of our districts are utilizing some version of in-person learning, several buildings and grade levels have had to move to remote learning at different times. In most of those cases, the decision to move to remote learning was due to staffing shortages, not positive student COVID-19 cases. We need to be creative in recruiting and employing more people who can serve as substitutes. One temporary solution is the passage of SB 388.

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 they will use for the rest of the 2020-21 school year. I am confident that our organization and the districts we serve will use sound and cautious judgement when developing the requirements and selecting substitute candidates.

Although I think this is an important immediate solution for the 2020-21 school year, I encourage the General Assembly and the Ohio Department of Education to explore long-term answers to the substitute shortage. I recommend allowing undergraduate teacher education students to obtain a substitute teacher license and reducing the minimum education requirement for a substitute teacher license from a Bachelor's degree to an Associate's degree.

Failing to act on this legislation will result in more schools being forced to move to remote learning as we continue to work through the remainder of the 2020-21 school year. SB 388 will remove one major barrier for our schools by expanding our pool of substitute teachers.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.