



**Senate Education Committee
Senate Bill 388 Testimony
Buckeye Association of School Administrators
Ohio Association of School Business Officials
Ohio School Boards Association
December 8, 2020**

Chair Lehner, Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Senate Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity submit proponent testimony on Senate Bill (SB) 388. My name is Kevin Miller with the Buckeye Association of School Administrators and joining me in support of this legislation are Jennifer Hogue with the Ohio School Boards Association and Katie Johnson with the Ohio Association of School Business Officials.

Our organizations represent superintendents and assistant superintendents, school board members, treasurers/CFOs and other school business officials from around the state.

On behalf of our members, we support 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. SB 388 is a companion bill to House Bill 756.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, Ohio's school districts were starting to experience a shortage of certified classroom substitutes. The impact of the Coronavirus has obviously made a difficult situation even more challenging. An already shallow pool of substitutes has been further depleted because many substitutes have decided to sit out this school year. According to data provided by the Ohio Department of Education for the week of November 30 to December 4, 245 of Ohio's school districts are meeting in person five days a week and 176 school districts are in a hybrid model, meaning a certain percentage of students attend in-person each day. 184 districts are fully remote.

Especially for those districts that are delivering instruction in person, whether it be full-time or in a hybrid model, 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. When you add these demands to the normal needs for substitute teachers, the pool of substitutes is falling far short of filling district needs.

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. 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.

One thing the bill does not specify is whether or not the newly eligible substitutes employed under the bill must be licensed by the State Board of Education. Currently, substitute licenses for subbing in grades K-12 are issued by ODE. We suggest that the bill be amended to clarify licensure requirements.

As you consider this bill, there are a few items to note. First, there are other states that have less stringent ongoing requirements for substitutes than Ohio. For example, in Indiana, a sub must hold a high school diploma or high school equivalency certificate, be 18 years of age or older, and meet the requirements set forth in the screening process of the school employer. In Illinois, a substitute teacher is required to hold an Associate's degree, and not a Bachelor's degree. In North Carolina, substitutes are not regulated by the state, allowing each district to determine the requirements for the subs they hire.

A second item to note is how the use of technology has changed the role of the substitute. In many districts where each student has access to a laptop, Chromebook, or iPad, the teacher often records the lessons ahead of time and the students can access the lessons in the absence of the teacher. For districts where a teacher is quarantined at home, the teacher is often still connecting with the class via Zoom or another virtual tool to provide instruction, but a substitute is needed to be physically present in the classroom with the students. In both of these situations, the substitute is monitoring the students and not providing actual instruction.

We have heard from various superintendents whose students are attending in person that if they have to go to virtual learning, it will not be because of the number of COVID cases among the student body or the number of students who have to be quarantined—it will be because they don't have enough substitutes to cover for absent teachers. SB 388 would help to resolve substitute issues for school districts as they seek to deliver instruction in the most appropriate manner for their students and their communities. We encourage committee members to act swiftly on SB 388 to provide relief as soon as possible for Ohio's schools.

Please contact us with any questions you might have.