

## **SB 388 Testimony**

Senate Education Chair Lehner, Vice Chair Brenner, and members of the Senate Education Committee. I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today in regards to Senate Bill 388. My name is Shawn Hoff, I serve as the Assistant Superintendent for the Preble County Educational Service Center. I am speaking to you today on behalf of the school districts in Preble County and as a proponent of SB 388, which allows school districts flexibility in employing substitute teachers for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year only. In addition to providing this flexibility, it also contains an emergency clause that would allow that flexibility to occur immediately for school districts across the state.

At the Preble County ESC, we employ all of the substitute teachers for the five districts in our county. We lost approximately 30% of our potential subs for this school year specifically because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the fear of becoming ill. Currently, we have 72 active substitute teachers countywide. While this may sound like a sufficient number of substitutes to some, when spread across all districts in the county it quickly creates a shortage.

Our districts are doing everything they can to keep students in school, including teachers covering other classes during their planning period and combining classes in larger areas, like an auditorium to maintain social distancing while the students work through Google Classroom for their specific course. Superintendents are also pitching in to sub in classrooms where needed just to keep the students in school, where they need to be. Thus far, three of our five districts have gone to remote learning at different times, in large part due to the lack of substitute teachers to cover classrooms. Teachers are planning for, and teaching their regular school day, working with remote learners all hours of the day and evening and then covering additional classrooms to keep students in school. The passage of SB 388 would help to alleviate the latter of those responsibilities.

Since the start of the school year on August 24th, one of our small school districts (Tri-County North) has had 120 vacancies for teachers, 85 of those left unfilled. That is 71% of those positions left unfilled by certified substitute teachers under the current state requirement that includes having a Bachelor's degree. Some of those vacancies were filled by teachers during their plan period or other creative ways as I mentioned before. Another one of our districts (Preble Shawnee) has had unfilled vacancies 56 out of 59 instructional days as of December 4th. These are just two examples of the struggles our school districts are facing. We need more help, and the flexibility to get that help.

In my duties as the Assistant Superintendent, one of the things I do is sit down and interview each and every potential substitute teacher for all of our county schools. This year I have had 27 substitute teacher interviews and one of my recent interviews stated she decided to look into substitute teaching because her grandkids talked to her about the number of their teachers who were out and other teachers or the principal filling in for them. She wanted to do her part, as she stated. Students are noticing the burden on our full-time teachers as well. I have received numerous phone calls since October from individuals inquiring about substitute teaching because they know schools are short staffed. Unfortunately, when it comes time to talk about qualifications our conversations end there because they do not have the necessary Bachelor's degree, which is currently required in the state of Ohio.

SB 388 would help to resolve this qualification issue by allowing districts to employ substitute teachers that may be otherwise qualified outside of the lack of degree requirement. Options in place of the Bachelor's degree could include but are not limited to an Associate's degree, a high school diploma, participation in a locally developed substitute teacher workshop or other qualifications deemed appropriate by the local school districts board of education, but should also include an age requirement. I encourage committee members to act quickly on SB 388 to help our districts in this time of need.

Thank you for your time and I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.