

House Finance Committee

March 9, 2021

Testimony on House Bill 110/HB 1, the Biennial State Operating Budget and the School Funding Bill

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Chairman Oelslager and members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on HB 110 as well as HB 1, the biennial state budget bill and the school funding formula bill. I am Ann Brennan, the Executive Director of the Ohio School Psychologists Association and I would like to testify on two issues related specifically to the profession of school psychology. Our association represents approximately 900 school psychologists working in Ohio's schools. In addition to the specific issues that I will explain further, I would like to express OSPA's support of the HB 1 provisions that update the special education cost study and funding the factors at 100% of the cost to districts.

The first issue I would like to highlight and thank the Governor for including in the state education budget is the school psychology intern program special education enhancement funding. This program is vital to the Ohio school psychology profession as it supports the ODE approved school psychology training programs by funding the intern placements in school districts. We continue to experience shortages of school psychologists in many parts of the state. The university training programs address these shortages by working in their geographic regions to determine where the unmet needs are, and then working with school districts to assist in the establishment of intern placements. One concern I have regarding this special education enhancement fund line item in HB 110, funded at \$3 million in each fiscal year, is assuring that it will be retained if and when HB 1 is then passed and included in the State Budget. This intern funding is the lifeblood of the Ohio School Psychology Intern placement program and is essential to its' continuation. For your information I have attached a white paper describing in more depth this program.

I would like to share with you what OSPA has done and continues to do, in partnership with others, to address the school psychologist shortage.

The school psychology shortage has worsened in recent years primarily due to the STRS changes that occurred which encouraged licensed educators, including school psychologists to retire earlier than previously expected. We have nine Ohio and National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) approved school psychology graduate training programs and they collectively place 100 – 105 interns in approved school district intern sites for their last supervised year of training. These interns are paid a salary stipend through the state funded school psychology intern program, which

has been funded for over 60 plus years. It assures uniform, high quality training experiences. Interns are required to take jobs in Ohio's schools for at least one year following graduation and licensure. This supply of school psychologists has until recently met the job placement demand for most school districts, except for some in the more remote rural pockets of the state, where recruitment and retention has been more challenging.

Over five years ago OSPA formed a School Psychologist Shortage Task Force which focused on identifying the problem as well as recommending a multi-layered set of recommendations. I will be happy to make that report available to you. In addition to that report, ODE also facilitated a Related Service Provider Workgroup to Address Related Service Provider Shortages, OSPA had 3 representatives on that workgroup. Our work ended in February, 2019 and the report is available on the ODE website. That report includes substantive recommendations, many of which are similar to the OSPA Task Force report recommendations. Part of the work of this workgroup was to produce a survey for related service providers, asking them certain recruitment and retention questions. The report includes that survey analysis and findings. We also produced helpful, brief, one page descriptions of the roles and responsibilities of each provider and videos of a representative of each profession explaining what services they provide to students, families and schools. Both of these resources, available on ODE's website, are valuable educational and recruitment tools.

One very promising recommended proposal that I would like to describe is the concept of a "grow your own" recruitment and retention model program to place school psychologists in the hardest to staff schools. The idea would be to provide incentive funding for the current university training programs to use to partner with ESC's or individual school districts to recruit professionals perhaps already working in the school district for placement in a part-time school psychology program. This training program would need to be part-time and delivered nearer to these shortage areas of the state. This type of partnership is already taking place in Mercer County through a collaboration with the University of Dayton, which has a part-time and full-time program.

The funding sources for this model could perhaps be leveraged from a dedicated state funding pool matched with local school district funds, with the school psychologist interns being placed in these hard to staff schools. The desired outcome would result in the same school district hiring these individuals, where retention would likely occur since these employees already reside in the area where the shortages exist. This source of funding would need to be in addition to the state intern program funding currently in the state budget, as that is needed for the 100 plus current interns in each co-hort group. Some of the current interns are being placed in under-served school districts through an intentional process, agreed to by the nine approved programs. I would be happy to provide more information about this. In order to target funds, it would be necessary to collect up-to-date data indicating where the most acute, longer-term shortages exist and utilize this "grow your own" model to place school psychologists in those school districts.

To conclude I would additionally like to thank the nine university training programs who have expanded their acceptance numbers to the allowable maximum in order to help address the shortage. OSPA works collaboratively with them in our solution based efforts.

Thank you again for this opportunity to provide written testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions or provide additional information, feel free to contact me by phone or email: annmo929@gmail.com.

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