

June 15, 2021

Chairwoman Manning, Vice Chair Bird, Ranking Member Robinson, and Members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in opposition to House Bill 151. My name is Carol Theis, and I am a retired educator. I spent my entire teaching career at the Solon City Schools. I have a Master's Degree in Educational Leadership with a focus on Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development. From the initiation of the Resident Educator Program in 2009 until my retirement in 2019, I was the program coordinator and served as a mentor and facilitator. I was passionate about working with teachers and helping them to become the best they can be. Even though I retired from working as a mentor and coordinator, I still care deeply about the program, and this bill is alarming since it would eliminate the Resident Educator Program and the RESA.

The Ohio Resident Educator Program has evolved since its inception through extensive feedback from all stakeholders. It has been refined and streamlined yet still includes the accountability so necessary to guarantee that all Ohio students have competent teachers. It has always included what I consider to be the building blocks of good instruction: planning, implementation, and reflection of lessons and assessments. These elements are incorporated into the Resident Educator Program as well as the RESA Assessment.

In my years of working with these programs, I became very aware of the different pre-service experiences that new teachers have. They run the gamut, and I quickly learned which universities were better than others in their teacher preparation. Since beginning teachers start their careers with very different levels of preparation, it is important for districts to have strong mentoring programs for beginning teachers. Good teachers evolve over time; they benefit from good mentoring and being able to hone their skills. The Resident Educator Program and the RESA are excellent tools to assure that all licensed Ohio teachers have successfully demonstrated these skills.

Designing a quality mentorship program requires countless hours of work, experience in mentoring new teachers, and knowledge of best practices. If each district is charged with creating a new mentorship program, some teachers will find themselves stranded on an island without support from districts that are unable to build and run a quality program on their own. I do not understand why the legislature would consider eliminating an excellent Resident Educator Program that already exists and mandate each district to reinvent the wheel. Please maintain the current Resident Educator Program and the RESA, so Ohio can continue to develop excellent teachers and all Ohio students will experience quality instruction in their classrooms. I urge you to oppose House Bill 151.

If you have any questions, I would be more than happy to discuss the Resident Educator Program with you. Please feel free to call me at 330-562-4957 or email me at caroltee1@aol.com.

Sincerely,
Carol Theis