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**Proponent testimony submitted to the
Ohio Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee
House Bill 403
Caitlin Bentley, Director of Statewide Programming
Ohio Network of Children's Advocacy Centers
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Chairwoman Manning, Vice Chairman Bird, Ranking Member Robinson, and fellow members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee, I thank you for your time today and for your consideration of House Bill 403. This piece of legislation would seek to close an existing loophole in the current laws, which allow an educator who retires while under investigation for misconduct the ability to find placement elsewhere without any documentation or record of previous investigations.

Current research and data collection on the incidence of school-based child abuse, that is children who are abused by school personnel, is sorely lacking. The Department of Justice estimates that as many as 10% of child abuse cases involve a perpetrator who is affiliated with a survivor's educational institution; that is one in 10 K-12 students. However, of these cases only between 1 and 5% are ever reported or initiate a formal investigation.

Without the documentation of this investigation, the Department of Justice reports the following:

"With no criminal conviction or disciplinary record, predators can obtain new jobs—and move on to other victims. On average, a teacher-offender will pass through three different districts before being stopped, and one offender can have as many as 73 victims in his or her lifetime." (Grant et. al, 2017)

Our organization works to ensure the safety and security of children everywhere, and we believe every child is entitled to an education free from abuse. By closing the existing loophole for teachers who retire under investigation, and providing future employers with key relevant facts, we seek to ensure the safety of these children.

Our position, in short, is that of accountability. As educators are accountable for the learning and development of the children in their care, they must also be held accountable for their behavior towards them. As the law is currently written, an educator who may have violated the trust and boundaries of their students would essentially have a "clean slate" should they retire in one district and seek employment in another.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to address the committee on this matter. I am happy to field any additional questions in person or via email at caitlin@oncac.org



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