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**HB 497 Proponent Testimony  
House Primary and Secondary Education Committee  
March 29, 2022**

Chairwoman Manning, Vice Chairman Bird, Ranking Member Robinson, and fellow Members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for your time today and for your consideration of House Bill 497. This piece of legislation would positively change Ohio's Third Grade Reading Guarantee Law by removing the consequence of grade level retention, as well as eliminating the fall administration of the Ohio State Test in English Language Arts for third grade students. My name is Katie Baker, and I come before you today as a mom of two boys- one in third grade and the youngest in preschool.

**Crane Center of Early Childhood Research and Policy (OSU):**

The Ohio State University's Crane Center for Early Childhood Research and Policy released a report in 2019 regarding the effectiveness of Ohio's Third Grade Reading Guarantee Law. According to the report, "Ohio's Third Grade Reading Guarantee was enacted in 2012 with the goal of ensuring that all third graders were reading proficiently before transitioning to fourth grade" (Logan, Justice, Davies O'Leary, & Purtell, 2018, pg. 1).

The researchers looked not only at the reading achievement of third grade students, but also analyzed the reading achievement of fourth graders since the goal of the law was to create long term, lasting change. Researchers analyzed reading state testing data in years previous to the law, to those reading achievement scores in the years following the law's inception. The study found that long term reading achievement for Ohio students has not changed, and in fact stayed stagnant during the 10 years that were analyzed.

The researchers then "looked at whether Ohio saw an increase in the number of proficient readers or a decrease in below basic readers over time" (Logan et al., 2018, pg. 6). Their data concludes that "the percentage of fourth graders who cannot read at basic levels has remained remarkably stable before and after the introduction of the third-grade reading guarantee" (Logan et al., 2018, pg. 7).

The Ohio Department of Education publishes an infographic each year to celebrate the 95% of Ohio's third grade students who have passed at least one test in order to be promoted to fourth grade the following year. Which in reality means that third graders will continue to be tested until a promotion score is achieved on at least one of the approved tests. It is clear that a score on a test does not equate to long term reading achievement as fourth graders did not "exhibit proficiency on the same test the following year" (Logan et al., 2018, pg. 7).

It is time that we acknowledge the failed attempt this law has made to positively impact long term reading achievement. Instead, as one Representative on this committee stated in a previous hearing, Ohio is a "test and punish" state. For years, Ohio's students have learned that the purpose of learning to read is to pass a test or be retained.

### **Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) Diagnostic Testing:**

Testing requirements within the Third Grade Reading Guarantee Law are significant. Every year since Kindergarten, my son has taken 3 computerized reading diagnostic tests; one administration in the fall, winter and spring.

My son's district, like 40% of Ohio districts or 730,000 of Ohio students, use the Measures of Academic Progress diagnostic test, also called the "MAP" test, which is published by the Northwest Evaluation Association, or NWEA.

This is a test aimed at measuring both reading proficiency and growth. According to the NWEA website, this Common Core Standard aligned test reveals how much growth has occurred between testing events and shows projected proficiency in reading. Please note that Ohio is not a Common Core Standard state, but instead teaches the Ohio Learning Standards.

By September 30th of every school year since my son started kindergarten, we have received a letter letting us know if my son was "on track" or "not on track" to meeting the requirements of the law based on his score for the fall administration of the MAP reading test.

To date, my third grade son has taken 10 MAP tests related to this law, and it would have been 11 had schools not shut down in the spring of 2020. By the end of this school year, my son will have taken 15 total tests related specifically to the Third Grade Reading Guarantee- MAP and State Tests combined.

### **Ohio State Test in English Language Arts:**

At approximately 3am on October 27th of this past fall, my third grade son came into my room because he was having a bad dream. He began to explain that his dream was about the Ohio

State Test, and in a matter of hours he would be taking Part 1. He was fearful that he would run out of time, not be able to answer all the questions, wouldn't be able to type his responses, or that his score wouldn't be high enough. Kids at school were talking about the test, and it was clearly on his mind. After calming his nerves enough to allow him to fall back asleep, I spent the next several hours awake and alarmed by this new anxiety my son displayed.

The week prior to this nightmare, my son came home from school each day telling my husband and me that he needed to learn how to type. He spent each evening on our computer playing typing games so that he could learn how to type quickly in order to prepare for the upcoming test. He informed me that he would only have 90 minutes to read two passages, answer 15 multiple choice questions which required him to go back into the text to find the answers, and then he would need to type a multi-paragraph essay. If you have not had the chance to view the practice test for the Ohio State Test in English Language Arts, please see the link provided with my testimony and take time to view what our third graders experience.

My son has never received formal typing instruction as he is only in 3rd grade. He repeatedly told my husband and me that he knew typing was going to slow him down so he wanted to practice. Ironically, my husband and I have been pleading with our son to slow down since he came into this world 9 years ago. We've been encouraging him to take his time so that he can produce work that matches his capabilities and quality that would make him proud.

My son made it through two days of testing for the Ohio State Test in English Language Arts that week. He came home relieved, and I didn't have the heart to tell him that he would have to take this same test again in the spring.

It also should be noted that during this same week in the fall, the American Academy of Pediatrics declared childhood mental health a National Emergency in our country.

I would be remiss if I didn't take this opportunity to thank this committee and its leadership for crafting Substitute Senate Bill 229 which created emergency language to protect the current group of third graders from retention. My family received an early Christmas present when Governor DeWine signed that bill into Law on December 14th. We no longer focus on tests that are not an accurate or valid measure of my son's reading ability. We no longer fear consequences of retention for not meeting a score on a high stakes test. Instead, we do what truly promotes long-term reading progress. We got back to enjoying books. And my son returned to his nightly reading ritual because he could now read stress free and for enjoyment.

Substitute Senate Bill 229 was a good band aid to the problem. But you don't fix a broken leg with a band aid. The Third Grade Reading Guarantee Law is the broken leg of Ohio's elementary education system.

The results of the October OST were not available to teachers until late December, and ODE just shared the results with parents late last month. The results are not timely, and therefore not usable to guide instruction. My son's teacher was not able to use his score to determine what he needed next in his reading journey. The results were simply scores and by the time they were received the data was old.

The latin root for the word assess, means "to sit beside." That's exactly what my son's teachers do in order to learn about him as a reader. That's exactly what I do each night in order to support my son's progress at home. I'd like to thank my son's school and his teachers for their significant effort since Kindergarten to support his growth and achievement in all areas. Our experience has been exceptional, even during the most challenging of times throughout the pandemic.

#### **Effect Size of Grade Level Retention:**

Author John Hattie published the book *IMPACT: Teaching Literacy in the Visible Classroom, Grades K-5*. The book serves as a resource for educators, and in this case legislators, to analyze various practices that can impact student achievement.

"The visible learning database is composed of over 1,200 meta-analyses of studies that include over 70,000 studies and 500 million students" (Fisher, Frey & Hattie, 2017, pg. 2).

The database looks at the effect size a given practice has on changing achievement. Knowing the effect size of a practice can help us decide if the practice is worth the effort to implement.

"John was able to demonstrate that influences, strategies, actions and so on with an effect size greater than 0.4 allow students to learn at an appropriate rate, meaning at least a year of growth for a year in school" (Fisher, Frey & Hattie, 2017, pg. 2).

Within the book, John Hattie ranks 150 different educational influences that can impact student achievement. These practices are ranked by effect size.

In Hattie's original work, grade level retention was ranked 148th out of 150, with an effect size of -0.13. Yet, after continued analysis, in 2017 John Hattie released a more extensive third version titled "Visible Learning Plus," and retention is ranked 244th out of 252 influences, with

an effect size of  $-.32$ . Therefore, research proves retention is not a high quality educational practice to implement in the state of Ohio.

**Parent Rights:**

My husband and I are our sons' most important advocates. However, the Third Grade Reading Guarantee Law does not provide parents any rights to object or disagree with the consequence of retention. My children do not meet any of the exemptions under the law, and Ohio does not have a testing "opt-out" choice. Therefore, according to page 15 of the Third Grade Reading Guarantee Guidance Manual, if my children do not take the state tests, they will not have a score and thus be automatically retained until a promotion score is reached. Parents deserve a seat at the table, and should have the right to voice their refusal of retention to support their child's educational path.

Thank you for listening to my testimony and for favorably considering House Bill 497. And again, on behalf of the 8 and 9 year olds in Ohio, thank you for the passage of Substitute Senate Bill 229 earlier this school year. At this time, I'm happy to answer any questions from members of the committee.

Sincerely,  
Katie Baker

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