



OHIO EDUCATION ASSOCIATION



AS THE VOICE FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS

House Bill 497- Proponent Testimony
House Primary and Secondary Education Committee

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The OEA will lead the way for continuous improvement of public education while advocating for members and the learners they serve.

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Chair Manning, Vice Chair Bird, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the Committee:

My name is Jeff Wensing. I am a high school math teacher from Parma and I currently serve as the Vice President of the Ohio Education Association (OEA). On behalf of the 120,000 members of OEA, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 497. This bill would eliminate student retention under the Third Grade Reading Guarantee and reduce mandated state testing by limiting the 3rd grade ELA achievement test to a single administration.

I would like to thank you Chair Manning and Ranking Member Robinson for being lead sponsors of this important bill and to thank the co-sponsors on the committee as well. As I've talked to elementary school teachers across the state, they often share with me the frustration they feel about the over testing of students and voice their opposition to using test scores to make high-stakes decisions about students.

OEA's legislative policies adopted by our members state opposition to using standardized testing as the decisive factor in decisions to promote or retain students. Retention or promotion is a serious decision with a large impact on the student. This should not be based on a single test score. Teachers have access to more information and have a deeper understanding of a student's classwork and abilities. Educators and parents should be empowered to make these decisions.

I will note that the bill maintains the focus currently in state law to identify struggling readers early, inform parents, and provide appropriate intervention services. Literacy is the foundation to learning and this focus must be maintained. However, we believe that basing high-stakes decisions on test scores is improper and not in the best interests of our students.

Because the bill would do away with the retention of students based on their score on the 3rd grade ELA test, the bill also reduces this test to a single administration during the year. Under current law, this test is administered in the fall and the spring. Teachers will still have plenty of information about a student's ability to read based on diagnostic tests, in class work, one-on-one instruction and teacher assessments. This information is timely and allows educators to identify student needs and individualize instruction—unlike the results of the state tests.

I am excited and support this reduction in state-mandated testing as it will provide some measure of relief from testing requirements and allow additional time for teaching and learning in the classroom.

Chair Manning, this concludes my testimony. I urge support of HB 497. I'm happy to answer questions at this time.