

Chair Manning, Vice Chair Bird, Ranking Member Robinson and Distinguished Members of Ohio's 134th General Assembly,

My name is Richard Nocks and I am honored to present to you testimony in support of House Bill 497. I am a retired classroom teacher and coach, having given 35 years of service to the children of the Southwest Local School District in Harrison, Ohio. I also speak as a proud parent and grandparent of 6 individuals who have attended, are currently attending or will attend Ohio schools in the future. They will be impacted by action taken by this state legislation.

I am thankful that you have maintained your resolve to rectify the conflicts in Ohio that are from the previous administration's attempt to promote change. This is an important effort to improve the quality of education in our state. I am proud of the grass roots effort to bring to you the major issues that are at the heart of the problem:

1. Why does the testing for the 3rd grade program developed by NWEA, a "not for profit" West coast lobbying group, also have a "for profit" business that constructs, deploys and evaluates the test given throughout the state of Ohio?
2. Why does the ODE website state "parents have no rights or say in the testing process for retention possibilities?"
3. Why are norms for the test based on "pre COVID" scores of students and then raised during the COVID pandemic?
4. Why do the tests utilized in the program actually evaluate/assess "common core standards" not the state of Ohio learning standards?
5. Why is there major confusion on the acceptance of responsibility for who is actually determining the "cut scores" for retention purposes?
NWEA <-----> State Board of Education <-----> Local Districts
6. Why does the 3rd grade reading guarantee still exist when Ohio State University research tells us "no meaningful data was documented to suggest significant improvement to Ohio 4th grade achievement from the time the 3rd grade reading guarantee began?"
7. Why is the 3rd grade class the most tested of any grade?
8. Why do testing exams require skills that are several years ahead of current third grade curriculum to even complete the exam itself?
9. Why does the third grade reading guarantee still exist when there never has been a "test" that results in a single numerical score that could truly characterize all the strengths, weaknesses and experiences of an individual? What would be in an eight year old mind at a given moment to enable someone or a number to determine retention possibilities?

I am encouraged by the results of cooperation between parents, grandparents, local teachers and administrators with various state representatives. This cooperation produced emergency sub bill 229 to address current 3rd grade student needs. Your consideration of HB 497 to permanently change the course for future 3rd grade students is the logical next step.

HB 497 results from local concern and legislative branches working together to get things done for the benefit of the children. HB 497 will reduce mandated testing to be equivalent to other grades. It will allow districts to expand instruction time and allow for intervention and remediation that could be necessary for given students. Elimination of the 3rd Grade Reading Guarantee will reduce undue stress and pressure on students, teachers and parents alike.

We are a child's most important advocate, especially for the eight year old that cannot render much of a response on their own. Grassroots efforts are gaining momentum as every 3rd grade student has parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles that can all vote.

Please support HB 497!

Thank you for your time,

Richard Nocks