

## **Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee**

**Nov. 30, 2022**

### **Proponent Testimony on SB 356**

**Jennifer Glenn**

Good afternoon Chairman Brenner and Members of the Primary and Secondary Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today as a proponent of SB 356. I am here representing myself as a school psychologist in Columbus City Schools, and on behalf of the Executive Board of the Ohio School Psychologists Association. I have 14 years of experience working in public schools, first in Massachusetts and now in Ohio. Expanding Ohio's definition of "developmental delay" to include children less than ten will allow more students to continuously access special education services. There are two main groups of children who will be positively affected by this change: children transitioning from pre-school special education services into school-aged programs, and children transferring to Ohio public schools from other states.

Children moving from preschool-aged services to school-aged services are required to undergo a transition evaluation. Often, young children may not meet the full eligibility criteria for one of the thirteen school-aged disability categories, and they are exited from special education services. Many still demonstrate a need for specially designed instruction, but cannot access it upon transitioning to kindergarten. They then have to go through the special education referral process again, and services are sometimes delayed for years until the child meets the eligibility criteria for a school-aged category. Children with learning disabilities and emotional disabilities are most likely to be affected, due to the nature of the criteria they must meet to be eligible for services under these categories.

Twenty-three states use the entire age range of 3-9 for developmental delay allowed under IDEA. An additional 17 have ranges somewhat more restricted than the federal range, but more inclusive than Ohio's current range. When a child with special needs under the developmental delay category moves to Ohio from one of those 40 states, but is older than six, the receiving school district is not able to accept the special education documents, since that child does not meet the eligibility criteria for developmental delay in Ohio. In Columbus City

Schools during the 2021-22 academic year, there were thirty children who were in this situation. So far during the 2022-23 academic year, there have already been fifteen. In these cases, a new evaluation must be conducted to determine if the child meets criteria for any of the school-aged disability categories. It must be conducted in compliance with legal timelines, and in the midst of a big transition for that child into a new state, home, and school. It must be conducted by people who are then unfamiliar to the child. This can delay much-needed services for that child, and may result in them spending a significant portion of time in a setting not appropriate for their needs.

These concerns have become even more apparent as we in education try to mitigate the effects of the pandemic. As a result of pandemic-related restrictions, many children missed opportunities for in-person visits with their primary care physicians, who are often the first to recognize signs of developmental delays. Those physicians are typically able to identify and refer children for further evaluation in any areas of concern. Without those visits, children come into schools with delays in everything from language to motor skills, social-emotional skills to self-care skills. They may not fully meet the criteria for one of the school-aged disability categories, but need specialized instruction once they enter school. We have also seen an influx of students moving in from other states due to family circumstances related to the pandemic, leading to more evaluations to determine if Ohio's school-aged criteria can be met. We must weigh the cost to school districts and to the state of providing services to children longer under the Developmental Delay category against the cost to children of delaying those services.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I'd be happy to answer any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

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