

**Testimony on H.B 572**  
**Ohio House Higher Education Committee**  
**June 12, 2024**

Chair Young, Vice-Chair Manning, Ranking member Miller and distinguished members of the House Higher Education Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to offer testimony on HB 572.

I am Tom Lasley, founder and former CEO of Learn to Earn Dayton and also former Dean and Professor Emeritus at the University of Dayton. I have spent my professional career working at the systems level to address a wide variety of educational and social issues and continue to serve on a number of different community and national boards, including the National Council on Teacher Quality and the National Museum of the United States Air Force Foundations Board.

For well over a year, you in the legislature have been working to address how reading is taught to our young learners in the state of Ohio. I applaud those efforts. But reading is not the only issue confronting our state's ability to enhance the economic mobility of our young people and the ability of the state to secure the intellectual capital that it needs and requires for the next generation jobs that we all want.

Ohio's teachers are confronting real issues with student mental health and behavior. However, as is the case with the science of reading, the same measure of evidence to suggest the right path forward in dealing with student mental health and behavior issues simply does not exist. Because of that circumstance I applaud what is being proposed in HB 572. Specifically, it makes real sense to:

- 1 Determine what teacher preparation institutions are doing currently to prepare preservice teachers in a way that allows them to effectively deal with and understand the wide range of behaviors that they will confront in classrooms.

2 Create summaries of what is occurring that allow the Department of Education and Workforce to make a set of recommendations for standards that will guide preparation practices across all higher education institutions.

3 Ensure that any and all recommendations being made are consistent with competencies such as those highlighted, for example, by CASEL (the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning) and that deal with classroom management, behavior management, student mental health, and trauma-sensitive instructional practices.

Almost any list of common problems confronting teachers will identify behavior and classroom management. Most teacher education institutions do not adequately prepare preservice teachers for the behavioral challenges that their graduates will confront, and there are reasons for that circumstance: First, there is no evidence-based consensus on what specific behavioral management skills every teacher should learn. Second, it is very difficult for teacher education institutions to identify clinical settings in which regular classroom teachers are using practices well-grounded on research and that align with those being taught at the teacher education institution, which means that preservice teachers don't often receive effective clinical training. As a result: far too many teachers entering professional practice experience stress and frustration in managing behavior and dealing with students' mental health issues. Both teachers and students pay the price for that circumstance.

There are, however, some opportunities to improve the skills that teachers possess as a result of their professional education experiences. A guide for what should occur, for example, was published by the National Council on Teacher Quality several years ago and I believe it is still relevant. I should add that NCTQ is now in the process of reviewing and updating its expectations for professional preparation. Its new standards will focus more on the proactive strategies teachers can use to prevent challenging student behaviors from manifesting.

Another option is to build on the work that many school districts and community schools in Ohio are doing relative to PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports). PBIS is a multi-tiered and reasonably evidenced-based framework for

supporting students' behavioral, academic, social, emotional, and mental health, which also impacts teacher health and well-being. Higher education institutions could definitely incorporate PBIS into their teacher preparation curricula, with the knowledge that a growing number of teachers in classrooms are using PBIS, which would provide the necessary guided clinical practice supports.

Ohio has a serious chronic student absenteeism problem. I believe that some of that problem is attributable to the fact that we have not properly and effectively prepared far too many teachers to prevent and deal with the wide range of problems that they will confront in their classrooms. Students and teachers suffer because of the lack of adequate preparation.

As you are dealing with one big issue, the reading proficiency rates of Ohio students, let's take this opportunity to more adequately prepare teachers for another problem that we know plagues far too many schools: student behavior and the way teachers prevent and react to that behavior.

Through HB 572, let's establish some common expectations for what teachers should be able to do upon entering a classroom and what teacher education institutions should have in place to ensure that students learn and have the chance to practice those strategies while still in their preparation programs.

I offer my sincere thanks for all that you are doing to try to ensure that Ohio's teachers and schools are better positioned to meet the challenges of the future. I will be happy to answer any questions.