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Committees

Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education,
Chair

Finance

Primary & Secondary

Higher Education

Representative Gayle Manning

Ohio House District 52

Chair Bird, Vice Chair Fowler Arthur, and members of the Ohio House Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 117, which would no longer require that third graders be retained based on their third grade English Language Arts assessment score.

As a retired elementary school teacher, I understand the importance of literacy. A strong foundation in literacy and reading is something that will carry students far throughout their lives. The high stakes nature of the third grade English Language Arts test can be intimidating for these young students. The threat of retention causes anxiety for students who may not be strong test takers. A student, who is normally a good test taker, could be having trouble at home which can influence how they perform on a high stakes assessment. HB 117 will do four things: 1) End the retention requirement of the TGRG without parental consent; 2) limit required English Language Arts standardized testing in the 3rd grade to once a year; and 3) require the state create minimum standards for the use of phonics in the teaching of reading, as well as provide in-service training for teachers in the use of phonics; 4) requires districts expand reading intervention services to grades four and five.

Everyone on this committee shares the same goal—we all want students to have the literacy skills they need to make them

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successful in whatever profession they choose. Further, we have had many discussions on local control, flexibility for school districts, and parental involvement in a child's education. Instead of a one-size-fits-all approach to literacy that currently exists, House Bill 117 will give local and parental control to districts when deciding to retain a child.

As we know, every student in Ohio learns in a different way, and removing the high stakes nature of the third grade ELA will allow teachers more time to provide interventions to students relating to literacy. Reading interventions are an integral part of Ohio's Third Grade Reading Guarantee law, and this legislation changes nothing in regard to reading and literacy interventions. Instead of retention, incorporating literacy and reading earlier in a child's career would be beneficial. The precursor to House Bill 117 unanimously passed this Committee, and was overwhelmingly passed on the full House floor in the last General Assembly.

In summary, House Bill 117 will remove the high stakes nature of the third grade ELA test while allowing parental input in retaining or promoting a child. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to testify, and now I would like to turn it over to my joint sponsor.