

Chairman Bird, Vice Chair Fowler-Arthur, members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to share testimony this afternoon. I am Joshua Tripp, Principal at Chillicothe Intermediate School and recently elected Zone 1 Director for the Ohio Association of Elementary School Administrators. Zone 1 covers most of southeastern Ohio including Ross, Pike, Scioto, Vinton, Logan, Hocking, Jackson, Lawrence, Meigs, & Athens counties.

I have come to share my support for the language from HB 117 which is included in the House version of the budget bill, HB 33, and believe that removing the retention provision of the Third Grade Reading Guarantee if a student does not achieve a required score on the the 3rd Grade English Language Arts assessment is a positive step that is in the best interest of the students of Ohio.

The bill does not remove school districts' obligation to provide the necessary intervention and remediation services to students reading below grade level. By removing the retention provision, districts in Ohio will still be required to provide all of the other current services under the TGRG to hold districts accountable including:

- Students must be given a reading diagnostic assessment by September 30th in grades kindergarten through third grade.
- If the reading diagnostic shows that a student is not on-track (they are reading below grade level), schools must communicate with parents in writing as soon as possible. The notice is for the purpose of letting parents know their child is not reading on grade level and to share what current services the student is receiving.
- For each student who is not on-track (reading below grade level), the school also must:
  - ◆ Administer any necessary informal or formal diagnostic assessments to determine the instructional needs of the student;
  - ◆ Immediately provide reading instruction and/or intervention using research-based reading strategies that have been shown to be successful in improving reading among low-performing readers and are targeted at the student's identified reading deficiencies; and
  - ◆ Develop a Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plan (RIMP) within 60 days of receiving the student's diagnostic result.
- Districts must still report the students who are on a RIMP and also the research-based instructional strategies that are being implemented to increase their reading proficiency to the Ohio Department of Education through the Education Management Information System (EMIS).

The other requirements in the TGRG language have merit and hold districts accountable for the progress of their students. However, the retention provision only punishes the students who need the most help. It is very common to have students in the fall during the first administration of the ELA assessment in tears and families to report the anxiety that the assessment evokes in them. For the students who meet the promotion

criteria on the first administration, relief is usually found. However, the other students who do not reach promotion criteria have this weight on their shoulders for the remainder of the school year until the spring administration or an alternate assessment is administered. With students knowing the high stakes of their assessment, how can we expect them to come to school happy with a healthy focus for learning? Instead, they come with anxiety that if they do not do well on an assessment, the friendships they have formed since kindergarten are at risk if their peers are promoted and they are not.

A student who is subject to a RIMP remains on *not on-track* status until they successfully pass the next state required diagnostic tests and they are included in the school's report card data for the year. Districts have the option of revising the RIMP based on the results of diagnostic assessments, but the not on-track status remains until the next diagnostic test indicates otherwise.

The TGRG has helped to make significant progress in increasing the standards of our reading instruction and student performance at the elementary level and also ensures that families are included in a child's educational process. All of these requirements would remain. Instead of punishing students, let's allow the teachers, parents, and administrators who know children the best make the case-by-case decision on what is best for their child rather than a blanket requirement. While it may be necessary to hold back a student based on other factors, retaining a student based on a high stakes test appears to be a punishment rather than a solution.

As the bill sponsors have pointed out, being held back in the third grade can have a tremendous negative affect on students, both emotionally and educationally. A much better scenario would be for students to be promoted to fourth grade if it is determined by their teachers and parents that it is in their overall best interest. Meanwhile, schools would continue to intervene with these students to help them grow their reading skills without the harmful stigma of having "failed" third grade.

We have appreciated the flexibility afforded to districts by the legislature during the past three school years. It has allowed educators, school leaders, and parents to decide what was best for students on a case-by-case basis as to whether or not to promote students to the fourth grade. We would appreciate that this flexibility continues through HB 33, giving those closest to the children the ability to make decisions based on what is best for them.

This concludes my testimony. I would be happy to address your questions.

Respectfully submitted,

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