

WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

Please complete the Witness Information Form before testifying:

Date: _____

Name: _____

Are you representing: Yourself Organization

Organization (If Applicable): _____

Position/Title: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Best Contact Telephone: _____ Email: _____

Do you wish to be added to the committee notice email distribution list? Yes No

Business before the committee

Legislation (Bill/Resolution Number): _____

Specific Issue: _____

Are you testifying as a: Proponent Opponent Interested Party

Will you have a written statement, visual aids, or other material to distribute? Yes No

(If yes, please send an electronic version of the documents, if possible, to the Chair's office prior to committee. You may also submit hard copies to the Chair's staff prior to committee.)

How much time will your testimony require? _____

Please provide a brief statement on your position:

Please be advised that this form and any materials (written or otherwise) submitted or presented to this committee are records that may be requested by the public and may be published online.

Carole Richards
Private Provider to Ohio Scholarships
Proponent & Interested Party Testimony HB 440
May 31, 2024

Ohio House Primary and Secondary Education Committee – HB 440 – Proponent Testimony

Chairman Manning, Ranking Member Robinson, and fellow members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for hearing proponent testimony on House bill 440 today. My name is Carole Richards, and I am the Founder and Chairman of North Coast Tutoring Services. I started this company in 1985 with only \$200. The only thing I had to sell was good service.

As my colleague, Ms. Smith covered the first part of the legislation, I will cover the second which addresses requirements for qualified educator credentials providing services to students accessing Autism and JPSN Scholarships.

I have been involved in public and private education for over 5 decades.

- We've been Scholarship providers for **20 years**.
- Our model was used to create the Instructional Assistant Permit
- Teacher and Tutor education in Science of Reading (30+ years)
 - 3-Year Research Study nearly complete on latest delivery model of this curriculum with teacher training embedded in student instruction.
- Summer Camp for kids with disabilities for 16 years (55 students ages 6-19)
- Welfare to Work A--Z Program
- Home Instruction: School districts come to us with their problems.
- Legal Settlements
- SES – No Child Left Behind
- Adult Workforce Basic Skill Classes – Governor Workforce Excellence Award
- Nortec Innovation Award for Reading Program
- Teacher & Parent Education in Learning Differences

We support a broadening in the scope for which qualified educators may provide intervention services to scholarship students. However, we have concerns that credentialed educators with other licensures, acting under the supervision of Intervention Specialists, are not explicitly identified in the language. This should include licensed teachers, and long-term substitutes for Autism & JPSN, and Instructional Assistants for Autism. This concern results from the lack of clear and consistent communication and rulings by DEW over the last 9 months.

We support requirements for provider accountability and oversight to ensure proper intervention as is evident by our work with ODE to create the Instructional Assistant Permit for the Autism Scholarship, and our consistency in being an approved provider for the last 20 years.

School choice was created to give families less restrictive options for educating their children. Scholarship providers and staff should not be held to more restrictive requirements than public school districts. Due to the current shortage of licensed intervention specialists, we know of at least 4 public school districts who have licensed teachers or long-term substitutes who are filling the role of Intervention Specialist. In at least one district where a long-term substitute is performing this role, teacher salaries and retention rates are among the top in the state.

We applaud the efforts of the Governor and the Ohio Dyslexia Committee (ODC) to ensure students are receiving quality researched based literacy instruction. However, we have concerns about the implementation of the requirements for teachers seeking to obtain these new certifications. It will take years for the training, certification, and qualified educators to be available for public schools, and private providers. Many of the trainings and certifications outlined by the ODC take multiple years to complete and are very expensive. These programs also have a limited number of trainers to educate the teachers in their programs.

We acknowledge the Sponsors' intent to reduce supervision requirements for educators with literacy certification, thereby expanding services. However, the expansion in rules and magnitude of the requirements for educators and providers will increase operating costs and have the opposite effect on fixed scholarship budgets. When we asked DEW consultants about the increases in requirements, we were told to adjust our fees to cover the additional administrative costs. The result, fewer services for students.

We do not seek to diminish the credentials of intervention specialists or literacy specialists. Rather we wish to highlight student budgetary concerns, and the other potential educators from whom students can benefit. As we have seen with literacy education of teachers at the university level, these credentials don't guarantee effective instruction for typical or neurodivergent students. Additionally, specific subject credentials do not ensure a tutor will be the right fit for a child.

“The first thing I noticed, since [tutor with long-term sub] has been tutoring my granddaughter is that she works independently on her homework and school work. Before [student] required so much help, I felt like I was in the 8th grade again. [Student] has always read very slowly. To the point that I would snap my fingers quickly hoping it would encourage her to read faster. A few weeks ago, I asked [student] to read something for me. I was both shocked and amazed at how much her reading has improved!!! She was pronouncing her words clearly and correctly and she was reading at a steady pace. I could not believe it!!”

– NCTS District Contracted Tutoring Grandparent

“As we continue through the academic year, it is obvious that our son is enjoying his time with his tutor [5-year Elementary 1-8]. At the beginning of the year, he did quite a bit of complaining, but she has clearly won him over with her patience and attention to his interests while working on his academic goals. I marvel at her patience and ability to keep him on task. He has been making steady progress toward his goals and we owe that all to her. She is flexible, easy to work with and very accommodating. We have truly been blessed to be working with North Coast after 2 rough years in the public and private school systems.” – Autism Scholarship Parent

*“My tutor [retired elementary teacher with 5-yr long term sub] greatly helped me to learn new things. She assisted me many times with my English, spelling and writing skills. She even gave me a cat calendar! She encourages my interest in WWII history, planes, ships, etc. She is very enjoyable, pleasant and delightful. She helps make my tutoring days fun.”
– Jon Peterson student*

“My tutor [instructional assistant permit] helped me so much in math, going from simple division to algebra. She is kind, funny and smart. She is also very patient with me. She also helped a lot with my spelling, reading and writing skills. She even gave me some books on my favorite topics! I am so glad I had a tutor like her. She helps make learning math fun.” – Autism student

*“Tutor [instructional assistant] is a wonderful teacher. She is super patient and dependable. Because of her kind and caring nature my son has enjoyed learning math with her. It is easy for him to lose focus when the subject matter is challenging. Her approach is flexible and she tailors the lessons so that he learns at his pace which reduces anxiety and keeps him motivated.”
– Autism Scholarship parent*

*“She has dedicated much time and effort to creating lessons and activities and tutoring our oldest son. When they started out he needed a refresher on his alphabet and numbers and since that time we’ve seen much growth and improvement. He now enjoys reading chapter books, doing math problems, adding money and so much more! It’s a joy to know that she has a heart to help our son learn and grow.”
- Autism Scholarship parent*

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions the committee may have.

Sincerely,

Carole Richards