



**Senate Education Committee
House Bill 33 Proponent Testimony
Buckeye Association of School Administrators
Ohio Association of School Business Officials
Ohio School Boards Association
Ohio Association of Elementary School Administrators
May 3, 2023**

Good afternoon, Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today in support of the Third Grade Reading Guarantee changes proposed in Substitute House Bill (Sub. HB) 33. My name is Barbara Shaner, representing the Ohio Association of Elementary School Administrators. Joining me for this testimony is Katie Johnson with the Ohio Association of School Business Officials, Jennifer Hogue of the Ohio School Boards Association and Paul Imhoff from the Buckeye Association of School Administrators.

As you know, our organizations represent public school district superintendents, treasurers/CFOs, business managers and other school business officials, boards of education, and elementary school principals from around the state. We are testifying today on behalf of our members and their support for some important education policy changes proposed in Sub. HB 33.

First, Sub. HB 33 includes requirements for districts to utilize evidence-based teaching methods aligned with **the science of reading**. It prohibits the use of the three-cueing approach to teaching students to read unless the district obtains a waiver from ODE. The education community generally supports this change and many districts already utilize teaching methods aligned with the science of reading.

However, as Sub. HB 33 is adopted, care must be taken to be sure districts have the tools they need to implement this new requirement and that current practices can continue as long as they utilize evidence based approaches in teaching students to read. For instance, districts that have already been successful with the use of locally generated curriculum based on the science of reading, should be permitted to continue.

Sub. HB 33 also removes the legal mandate under the Third Grade Reading Guarantee (TGRG), that third grade students be retained if they do not achieve the required score on the third grade English language arts assessment. We believe this is a positive step that is in the best interest of students.

The bill does not remove school districts' obligation to provide the necessary instruction, intervention and remediation services to students reading below grade level. However, the bill recognizes that holding a third grader back regardless of the wishes of the parents and the professional view of the teacher, has the potential to set that student up for future failure. Under current law, parents have no choice in the matter.

Opponents of the elimination of the TGRG mandatory retaining provision have asked for assurances that schools be accountable for making sure students will learn to read. They've expressed fears that without the statewide mandate to retain students who fail the third grade test, the result will be the social promotion of students with no incentive for schools to do better.

Sub. HB 33 ensures that students will not be socially promoted and forgotten. While we believe school leaders and educators are already laser focused on helping students succeed in reading, the bill requires that provisions from the TGRG, such as the requirement for Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plans for students identified as reading below grade level, will stay with struggling readers at least through fifth grade. The bill extends the focus on phonics and other evidence based teaching tools beyond third grade.

Our members have pointed out they believe the new dyslexia laws that are currently in the implementation process will have a positive impact on student achievement in reading. We agree. Further, the bill's provisions around the Science of Reading will serve to set up a system which will strengthen the goals of the TGRG. These changes along with the elimination of the mandate to retain struggling third graders will provide the flexibility needed for educators and parents to do the right thing for students.

Individual students will receive services and support tailored to their specific needs. 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.

Ohio law has helped to make significant progress in meeting the needs of struggling readers. Sub. HB 33 continues that progress and ensures that parents are included.

We urge the committee to approve these positive education policy provisions in Sub. HB 33 as a positive step for students across Ohio.

This concludes our testimony. We will be happy to address your questions.