

Opponent Testimony for House Bill 33 Revised Code Section 3319.22

Elizabeth Kenyon, Professor of Social Studies Education, Kent State University

Education Committee

May 10, 2023

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chairwoman O'Brien, Ranking Member Senator Ingram and Members of the Education Committee,

Thank you for receiving my witness testimony. My name is Elizabeth Kenyon

I am writing in opposition of House Bill 33 Revised Code Section 3319.22

As a citizen who cares about education more broadly and teacher education, I am particularly concerned about the licensure grade band changes in Revised Code Section 3319.22. Though I am an associate professor of social studies education at Kent State University, I do not write on behalf of the institution but as a concerned citizen.

As a teacher educator at one of Ohio's many great state universities I get a behind the scenes look at what it takes to prepare new teachers for work in schools. I have worked extensively in both our early childhood/elementary program as well as in our middle childhood program. As such, I have concerns about the proposed grade-band change. These concerns are about how well we will be able to prepare teachers, and how well teachers will do once they are in classrooms given the limits of coursework that come with a four-year degree. Furthermore, this change may make it challenging for us to maintain accreditation and would add potentially unnecessary courses for our students.

My primary concerns are:

- Students will not be able to get either the content knowledge, or developmental knowledge necessary to teach in this grade-band in in a four-year degree.
- Teachers who graduate from our programs will be less prepared for their classrooms and more likely to leave teaching in their first few years.

My first concern is that preparing teachers for a PK-8 grade band in the current context will be very challenging, particularly to do it well. Currently, our early childhood/elementary pre-service teachers (PSTs) take five full semesters of teacher education courses. These courses teach about the developmental needs of students ages three to 11, how to develop literacy in young learners, how to create and maintain relationships with families and communities, and then how to teach math, science, English/Language Arts and social studies in grades K-5. All of these courses are targeted towards teaching young learners. The extensive and necessary coursework in teacher education limits the amount of content courses students can take in a four-year degree.

Our middle childhood program has three semesters of full-time teacher education courses which include the unique development of this age group and how to teach content with this group. The three semesters, and the focus on just two content areas instead of all four content areas allows a heavier focus on content courses in science, math, ELA and social studies. This content specialization, which comes with the more intense and expansive content that is taught in the middle grades, requires much more work in content courses prior to teacher education courses. This design was created in response to concerns in the past that teachers with the 1-8 licensure band had insufficient content knowledge for the middle school grades. This change would dilute both the content knowledge and the developmental knowledge which varies greatly between a three year old and a 15 year old. This developmental knowledge, which is unique to each age group, is crucial for effective teaching.

To prepare teachers for a PK-8 band with the current number of credit hours, it would be challenging to meet even the bare minimum of licensure requirements, let alone maintain the strength and quality our programs are known for. Essentially combining these programs into a PK-8 would result in teachers being less well prepared for the classroom in all grades, K-8. We try to provide students with experiences in a range of grades that they are likely to teach in. However, to incorporate meaningful experience in early elementary, later elementary, and middle school grades would be impossible. Less prepared teachers would be more likely to leave teaching all together during the very challenging first few years of teaching. This could potentially add to the teacher shortage.

As a teacher educator and the parent of children who attend schools in Ohio, I have grave concerns about the consequences of this grade band change on the teachers and schools of Ohio.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony. I would be happy to answer questions or provide further information.

Respectfully Submitted,

Elizabeth Kenyon

Associate Professor of Social Studies Education
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