



Association for Middle Level Education  
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**May 8, 2023**

**Testimony of Stephanie Simpson, CEO, on behalf of the Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE) to the Ohio Senate Education Committee, Andrew O. Brenner, Chair, re: HB 33:**

The Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE), a national membership association domiciled in Ohio, testifies in strong opposition to the proposed change to teacher licensure grade bands which would eliminate a specific middle grades licensure as stated:

*“After November 2, 2018, shall specify whether the educator is licensed to teach grades pre-kindergarten through five, grades four through nine eight, or grades seven six through twelve. The changes to the grade band specifications under this amendment section shall not apply to a person who holds a license under division(A)(1) of this section prior to November 2, 2018.” (Sub H. B. No. 33 As Passed by the House Lines 41664-41669)”*

We support the specialized preparation of middle level teachers at the preservice and graduate levels. It is through specific preparation that educators understand the developmental characteristics of young adolescents and appropriate curriculum, instruction, and assessment strategies that engage students and provide significant academic learning experiences. During the young adolescent years, ages 10-15, individuals go through more rapid changes than at any time of their lives other than from birth to age two. The extreme changes in physical, intellectual, psychological, and social-emotional development that students experience make it imperative that educators are trained to understand young adolescent development and create educational experiences that are respectful of students’ developmental needs.

This proposed change will not contribute to student success. During a time when the U.S. Surgeon General has issued a rare public health advisory calling on the nation to respond to the growing mental health crisis impacting adolescents, we should be especially cognizant of the importance of these youth being educated by educators who understand their developmental characteristics and are prepared to teach them. Similarly, this proposed change will not ease the national teacher shortage. Instead, it might exacerbate it through reduced retention of teachers ill prepared to meet the demands of such a wide grade span.

We know that this is so fundamental to student success that the tenet, *“Educators are specifically prepared to teach young adolescents and possess a depth of understanding in the content areas they teach,”* is included as one of 18 research-based characteristics of successful middle schools outlined in AMLE’s landmark best practice publication, *The Successful Middle School: This We Believe*. And in its recently published, *“Position Statement on the Professional Preparation and Credentialing of Middle Level Teachers”* (2022), AMLE states, *“The specialized professional preparation of teachers of young adolescents must be a high priority of teacher preparation programs, colleges and state certification agencies.”*

The proposed changes would fundamentally alter teacher preparation in the state of Ohio and jeopardize the existence of middle grades programs at colleges and universities across the state. As state departments of education and institutions of higher learning develop programs and requirements for teacher and administrator preparation and licensure, it is critical that the middle grades receive distinct and separate attention.