

**Opponent Testimony for H.B. 33**  
**Senate Education Committee**  
**Wednesday, May 10, 2023**

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**Dean, Education Department, Marietta College**

Chairman Brenner, Representative Edwards, and members of the Senate Education Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name Tanya Judd. I am the Dean of the Education Department at Marietta College and a member of the Ohio Association of Colleges of Teacher Education. I have experience as a middle school and high school teacher, and now have the joy of helping develop teacher candidates into effective beginning teachers.

I am here to discuss HB 33 (Pg. 1356, Lines 41664-41669), which would change the current grade bands for Ohio teacher licenses to PreK-8 and 6-12. This change both eliminates the current Middle Grades band of 4-9 and greatly expands the current Primary grade band from PreK-5 through 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

I recognize the current challenges faced by districts to secure and retain professionally trained, appropriately licensed, and effective teachers. While we understand the rationale of the proposed changes in licensure bands found in House Bill 33 (and originally H.B.9), we would like to present to you a balanced perspective on what may likely be unintended consequences of the change in grade bands found in the current draft of the proposed legislation.

I know my fellow educators have expressed their concern about the array of unintended consequences that the change to the current grade bands would have, such as:

- **Middle school kids are different, and have unique cognitive and developmental needs that teachers need to be trained for.** As my colleague Nicole Whitaker noted in her testimony “The middle school years represent a distinct developmental period whereby students are expected to develop a firm sense of self, establish and maintain a positive social support network, and effectively balance social, academic, and personal demands. For many students, the transition to middle school is a particularly daunting event because of the shift in emphasis from the supportive, mastery-based orientation typical of elementary schools to a performance-focused setting characterized by increased expectations for academic productivity, more intensive and teacher-directed instruction, and a greater focus on normative comparisons and high-stakes outcomes (Eccles et al., 1993; Midgley & Edelin, 1998; Schunk & Miller, 2002; Zimmerman, 2002).” (Cleary, 2009, p. 292)
- **The change will dilute reading instruction for the student population, grades PK-3.** We are at a place where we know that scientifically-based reading instruction in PK-3 is a game changer

for the ability of kids to succeed academically. The expanded grade band would require additional literacy coursework to address content literacy needed in grades 6-8, which could dilute the literacy preparation across both portions of the grade band. We would also have to find the space in the curriculum (and the clinical placements) to provide instruction at all of these levels, and to add means that we need to consider taking away something, which is particularly challenging in dual programs.

- **The same teacher who is magical with a preK student is not always the right fit for a middle school classroom (and vice versa).** In our teacher education programs we see this on a daily basis. Yes, the principal or superintendent has more flexibility in placing teachers, but teaching outside of their desired grade band is likely to lead to frustration, burnout, or even more personnel issues and/or teachers leaving the profession if they are not comfortable with teaching at a different part of the band.
- **Expanding the grade band may result in fewer licensed Intervention Specialists.** Since I am sure others have spoken to you about these other concerns, I want to make use of my time with you to discuss the unintended impact that the grade band change would have on dual preparation programs.

Marietta College is one of many institutions across the state of Ohio through the support of the Ohio Deans Compact for Exceptional Children that have redesigned their curriculum to provide inclusive teacher preparation programs leading to dual licensure in general and special education. This approach produces stronger teachers that have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to work with a specific developmental level of learners. According to the Deans Compact, “dual licensed teachers are better able to meet the developmental needs of EACH child, increase content knowledge among diverse learners, and differentiate instruction based on student needs” (Deans Compact, 2019). This shift makes it possible for teacher candidates to earn both a grade-banded IS license and a general education/content-area license (e.g., middle childhood) which would also serve to increase the number of intervention specialists in Ohio.

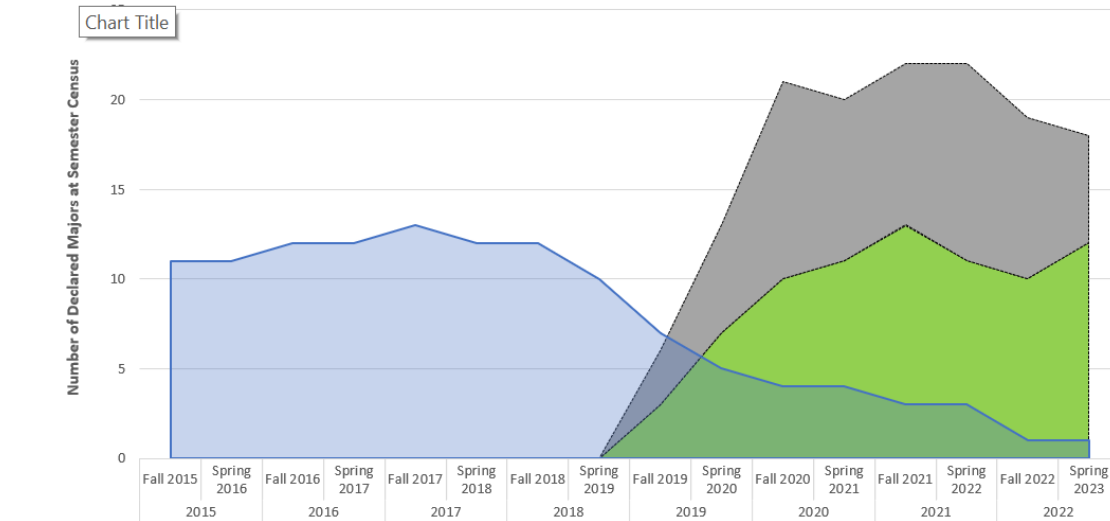
The philosophy behind dual, or blended, preparation is in line with the strategic plan created by Ohio, One Child...Our Future. Dual preparation speaks to the need for educator preparation programs to prepare each teacher candidate to master their content, the related pedagogy, and of course the unique needs of kids that are at that developmental level. Dual preparation programs focus on ALL children, meaning they are preparing candidates to serve multiple roles. These programs are large in terms of both credit hours and clinical experiences, as you might imagine. The additional coursework and clinical experiences that would be required to cover the larger grade band might mean that dual programs would be unable to meet the coursework and clinical demands to be successful and be forced to revert back to single license programs, **worsening the already alarming shortage of Intervention Specialists in Ohio.**

Marietta College has shifted all of its licensure programs to a dual, or blended, licensure. Our candidates engage in the coursework and clinical experiences to receive licenses in PreK-5 Primary AND PreK-5 Intervention Specialist; 4-9 Middle Childhood (2 content areas) AND 4-9 Intervention Specialist; and

grades 7-12 in specific disciplines (English/Language Arts, Math, Social Studies, Biology, Chemistry Earth/Space Science, and Physics) AND 7-12 Intervention Specialist. As you can see in the graph below one of those programs, Middle Childhood, has increased steadily since we introduced it in 2019. **Our program has continued to grow each year since the addition of the dual preparation programs at time where enrollments in teacher preparation have been in decline.**

Teacher candidates are attracted to dual preparation programs initially because of the flexibility it offers in finding a job. Along the way many of them decide that special education is really their home and become strong advocates for students with exceptional needs. The vast majority of our graduates take intervention specialist jobs right out of College. This year 85% of our May graduates have taken positions in special education classrooms already. **I know that flexibility is incredibly important to superintendents and districts as they try to find qualified personnel for their classrooms. The flexibility that dual licensure provides is a better solution to address the shortage and preserve effective instruction by preparing teacher candidates to address the specific developmental needs and transitions that happen between each grade band.**

Number of Middle Childhood Education Majors & Middle Childhood Special Education Majors by Academic Year and Semester, Marietta College, Academic Year 2015 - 2023



In preparing my testimony for you today I was reminded of the testimony submitted by an esteemed Ohio educator, Rae White, in 2017 when there was similar proposed legislation. It is eerie how much her words resonate with the concerns I have about the current legislation. She too noted that the proposed collapsing of teacher grade bands would have real impact on classrooms, educator preparation, but most importantly on the quality of learning for our PK-12 students as it minimizes the focus on a strong knowledge-base, the quality of developmentally appropriate preparation, and therefore the effectiveness of teachers. I also fear that it will result in the unraveling of dual preparation

programs that prepare teacher candidates to reach and teach **ALL** students by having them prepared to be a general educator or intervention specialist at the current grade band. We have made such great progress in moving toward the vision of *One Child...Our Future* in the last few years through dual preparation. **The shortage of special educators will increase significantly if dual programs are compromised.**

**I am advocating for a continued focus on PK-12 student learning and the whole child by maintaining the current grade bands. Please strike the language referring to changing the grade bands in H.B. 33 (Pg. 1356, Lines 41664-41669) or vote No on the bill as a whole.**

Thank you.

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