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200 W. Ward St.
Springfield, OH 45504

May 8, 2023

Ohio House Education Committee
The Ohio State House
77 S. High Street, 11th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Re: Written Testimony Opposing Sub HB 33

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

We strongly oppose the proposed grade band licensure changes included in Sub HB 33, page 1356, lines 41665-41672. Teacher licensure is a critical factor in ensuring that our children receive the best possible education. Decisions about grade bands should not be made via a budget bill that is primarily concerned with appropriations. Additionally, the proposed changes would intensify Ohio's current teacher shortage. As such, we call for the removal of these changes from HB 33. We urge that any proposed alterations to teacher licensure be carefully considered and debated by the appropriate education committees, agencies, and experts who have the best interests of students at heart.

Given the importance of teacher licensure and the potential impact of changes to the grade band structure, we present the following seven key reasons why we are requesting the removal of grade band changes from this bill:

1) Re-accreditation Challenges: The accreditation process would need to be redone for every teacher-prep program. This is a labor- and cost-prohibitive process that would divest significant resources from the instruction of future educators. Additionally, the accreditation agencies are not equipped to handle such a dramatic increase in the volume of accreditation requests.

To further complicate re-accreditation, the reviewers are usually working professors at other universities. They would not be able to continue teaching with such a large number of review requests. As dedicated faculty members, those professors would not be able to give the time needed to the increased accreditation demands, and the accreditation companies would not be able to staff their reviews.

2) State Program Approval Issues: When a teacher-prep program needs a program approved for licensure, a committee of volunteer experts (often working faculty members) must review every aspect of the program. This is an arduous, time-consuming process, and it is difficult to find experts who agree to participate in the process. If we need to re-approve every program, we would not be able to locate enough volunteers to participate in this process.

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3) Program Approval Failures: Programs that fail re-accreditation or that could not be re-approved by the deadline would be suspended from graduating licensed teachers. This would result in a short-term (1-2 years) or long-term (3+ years) suspension. In a state where we already have a growing teacher shortage, we cannot afford for any of our educator-preparation programs to be suspended from producing excellent licensed teachers.

4) Program Staffing Issues: To continue to be an accredited teacher-prep program, staffing requirements would be difficult-to-impossible, which would impact the ability of the university to continue offering teacher-prep programs. For each license and grade band, faculty must demonstrate the training and expertise required to teach each topic. For example, professors with PreK-3 experience and licensure would not be the ideal candidate to teach courses in the upper elementary and middle grades.

5) Teacher Shortages: If potential students in teacher preparation programs are feeling unsure about licensing requirements, student enrollment will decrease. With our current teacher shortage, the Ohio Department of Education would need to come up with new incentives to counterbalance the losses. Otherwise, the growing teacher shortage will increase at a faster rate.

6) Increased Special Education Teacher Shortage: For many years, Ohio has been experiencing a critical shortage of intervention specialists. To combat this problem, universities developed dual programs that allow teacher candidates to earn a general education license alongside a PreK-12 special education license. This has reduced the shortage of intervention specialists, which has helped Ohio come closer to meeting federal requirements to provide a free, appropriate public education. However, if the grade bands change, the new licensure requirements will increase needed coursework, and candidates will opt out of the dual option. This will further exacerbate the special education teacher shortage.

7) Reduction in Teacher Quality: Increasing the grade bands would revert Ohio to 1990's teacher licensing, which was determined to be poorly aligned to child development. The original band reductions were part of a larger effort to improve the quality of education. Teaching methods are very different for 4-year-olds versus 14-year-olds. Smaller grade bands provide a more specific and focused approach to teaching, and the change has allowed teachers to have specialized knowledge and skills in working with specific developmental levels. Narrower grade bands have also helped align Ohio more closely with national standards and best practices.

8) Increased Time to Complete Degrees: With wider grade bands, we could combat decreases in teacher quality by increasing the number of courses and topics that pre-service teachers must study in college. However, this would also increase the length of time to complete degrees, resulting in bachelor's degrees that take 5 or 6 years to complete. This would further deter potential teachers from majoring in education, which would worsen the teacher shortage.

In conclusion, we urge the Education Committee to remove the proposed grade band licensure changes from Sub HB 33. Changes to teacher licensure grade band structure should be made with input from experts in child development and education. Grade-band changes would have far-reaching negative impacts on Ohio's teacher shortages, special education compliance, teacher quality, teacher preparation programs, and most importantly, children. We implore the

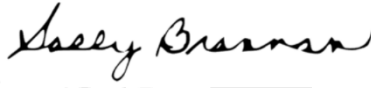
appropriate education committees, agencies, and experts to carefully consider and debate any proposed alterations to teacher licensure and work towards the best interests of students. Thank you for considering our concerns and opposing these changes.

Respectfully,

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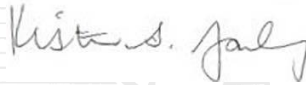
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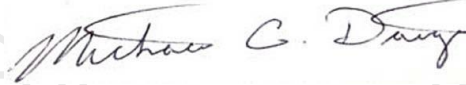
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