

Opponent Testimony for Sub. H. B. 33
Senate Education Committee
Wednesday, May 10, 2023
Frans H. Doppen, Ph.D.
Professor
Ohio University
The Patton College of Education
Department of Teacher Education

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

I am currently a Professor in the Department of Teacher Education in The Patton College of Education at Ohio University. Since 2003 I have served as a professor of Middle Childhood Education and eight years as department chair.

I would like to express my opposition to the inclusion of changes to grade band licensure that were included in Sub. H. B. 33 and originally proposed in H. B. 9. I am advocating for the removal of the grade band licensure changes indicated on pg. 1356, lines 41663-41678f, for a wide variety of reasons, including the fact that teacher licensure is not an appropriations-related item and, therefore, should not be included in a budget bill. Instead changes in licensure bands should be discussed and deliberated by the appropriate education committees, educational agencies, and education specialists with the best interests of students as the primary focus.

I share the following concerns as expressed in a statement released by the Ohio Association of Colleges of Teacher Education on April 25, 2023.

Changing the licensure bands to grades PK-8 and 6-12

- **Dilutes the content and pedagogical preparation for teachers across the grade level bands, resulting in weakened student learning.** PK-5 licensure provides a solid foundation in child development and preparation in instructional strategies for the youngest learners, which are significantly different from appropriate instructional strategies for middle-level learners. 4-9 licensure incorporates much more substantial content area preparation allowing for deeper content coverage and the use of grade-level appropriate strategies for students in the middle grades.
- **Risks staffing middle grades with teachers not committed to working with that population.** Before the institution of 4-9 licensure, middle grades were often assigned K-8 teachers who would have preferred to teach younger students or 7-12 teachers who would have preferred to teach in a high school. As a result, middle grades teachers ranged widely in their commitment to middle grades students, and student experiences suffered. The case for preparing educators specifically to work with middle-grade adolescents has long been championed by the Association for Middle-Level Education and is articulated in their research-supported publication **This We Believe** (2020), now in its fifth edition.

- **Implementation would be costly and time intensive. As chair of the department having been part of the process of redesigning the Early Childhood Education program of study [PK-3] to the now fully implemented Early and Elementary Childhood Education program, I can attest to the fact that** this would not be a quick fix for educator shortage issues; it will take a minimum of four years before any teachers would be licensed under the proposed grade bands. The proposed grade-level band changes will necessitate new pedagogical standards to be developed and adopted. These standards will need to be used by educator preparation programs to modify nearly all programs through internal approval processes, including newly modified P-5 programs and dual licensure programs for which intervention specialist grade bands aligning to the current regular education grade bands have just been incorporated into code. The Ohio Department of Higher Education will then need to review and approve all modified programs. The Ohio Department of Education will also need to develop and validate new licensure tests.
- **It may well make the shortage situation worse.** Along with attracting new teachers to the field, we know that retaining teachers is a key factor in solving the shortage issue. **Changing the grade bands will dilute the quality of middle-grade teachers specifically.** Providing these teachers with a less comprehensive program may lead to even higher rates of attrition.

Keeping the current grade band structure in place assures that teacher candidates in the middle-grade bands will be provided the necessary training in **content** areas so that they can feel confident in their preparation and ability to communicate content-rich instruction to their future students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Frans H. Doppen', written over a horizontal line.

Frans H. Doppen, Ph.D.
Professor

strategies for middle-level learners. 4-9 licensure incorporates much more substantial content area preparation allowing for deeper content coverage and the use of grade-level appropriate strategies for students in the middle grades.

- **It risks staffing middle grades with teachers not committed to working with that population.** Before the institution of 4-9 licensure, middle grades were often assigned K-8 teachers who would have preferred to teach younger students or 7-12 teachers who would have preferred to teach in a high school. As a result, middle grades teachers ranged widely in their commitment to middle grades students, and student experiences suffered. The case for preparing educators specifically to work with middle-grade adolescents has long been championed by the Association for Middle-Level Education and is articulated in their research-supported publication *This We Believe* (2020), now in its fifth edition.
- **Implementation would be costly and time intensive.** This would not be a quick fix for educator shortage issues; it will take a minimum of four years before any teachers would be licensed under the proposed grade bands. Proposed grade-level band changes would necessitate new pedagogical standards to be developed and adopted. These standards would need to be used by educator preparation programs to modify nearly all programs through internal approval processes, including newly modified P-5 programs and dual licensure programs for which intervention specialist grade bands aligning to the current regular education grade bands have just been incorporated into code. The Ohio Department of Higher Education would need to review and approve all modified programs. The Ohio Department of Education would need to develop and validate new licensure tests.
- **It may make the shortage situation worse.** Along with attracting new teachers to the field, we know that retaining teachers is a key factor in solving the shortage issue. Comprehensive preparation is associated with teacher retention (Sucher, Darling Hammond, & Carver Thomas, 2016). As mentioned, changing the grade bands will dilute the quality of middle-grade teachers specifically. Providing these teachers with a less comprehensive program may lead to even higher rates of attrition.

SOLUTION: Provide school districts with the option of applying for a waiver to allow a fully licensed teacher from one grade band to serve in another outside of the grade band listed on their license until they are able to find an appropriately licensed teacher. The teacher who would be serving in an alternate grade band must agree to the move. This solution will directly address emergency situations in their contexts. It also allows the state to gather data on where specific shortages exist. The supply and demand of teachers fluctuate over time; waivers are a quick, flexible, and efficient way to address this reality.

OACTE advocates for “Policies that enhance the professionalization of teaching through the recognition and reward of teachers as knowledgeable professionals with specialized knowledge and skills.” Keeping the current grade band structure in place assures that teacher candidates in

the middle-grade bands will be provided the necessary training in content areas so that they can feel confident in their preparation and ability to communicate content-rich instruction to their future students.

Based on these concerns, OACTE, SUED, and OAPCTE request that the P-5, 4-9, and 7-12 licensure bands be retained. We appreciate the provisions associated with the remainder of the HB9. The current teacher shortage is an urgent matter to address and we thank you for your commitment to finding solutions.

Sincerely,