



**Ohio Senate Education Committee
Testimony Melissa Cropper,
President of the Ohio Federation of Teachers
Interested Party Testimony Senate Bill 162:
Tuesday, December 5, 2023**

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, and Ranking Member Ingram. I am Melissa Cropper, President of the Ohio Federation of Teachers (OFT). OFT represents teachers in traditional and charter schools, support staff, higher education faculty and staff, social workers, library employees, and other public employees across Ohio. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to the interested party to SB 162.

Senate Bill 162 requires school districts to provide academic intervention services to students who score limited on state assessments in math, English language arts, or both.

We support SB 162 language that requires intervention services to be offered free of cost to the student and must not supplant the student's core academic instructional time. The bill establishes that intervention services can be provided directly through the school, through a vendor, or a combination of both. We prefer that school districts develop their intervention in-house.

Our members have already taken steps to improve academic outcomes like those outlined in the bill. The services include tutoring, additional instructional time, an extended school calendar, or other programs. Yes, we understand that many children still need additional help but we have seen steady progress to rebound post-pandemic. We should continue to provide intervention but we can't continue to weaken requirements for teachers, intervention specialists, and substitutes and expect high quality results.

Other critical elements are time and money, and the legislature has made progress toward meeting them. More time means more staff. The question lingers on whether enough money was allocated for these programs to sustain them beyond COVID funds, given that there wasn't an assessment of literacy programs prior to requirements for step up intervention.

We also want more ways for students to remove mandatory interventions than just using standardized tests. Formative assessments and grades should also be an alternative method to move out of intervention. One mandated state test does not always tell the whole story. We recommend adding options to the bill that would give the district more discretion.

Finally, we have to look at students that receive vouchers and are in need of intervention. Private schools should be required to provide the same interventions as public schools, especially if they are receiving public funds through vouchers.

Thank you for considering my testimony.