

Dear Members of the Education Committee,

I am writing to urge you to support Senate Bill 219, introduced by Sen. Catherine Ingram on January 24. This crucial legislation aims to rectify the licensure changes implemented by HB 33 (regarding grade bands in our education system. HB 33 changed the licensure grade bands to preK-8 and 6-12 starting with the 2023-2024 school year. Senate Bill 219 proposes a shift in grade bands to preK-5, 4-9, and 7-12, overturning the alterations introduced by HB 33. This adjustment is essential in providing a more effective and developmentally appropriate structure for our students, ensuring that they receive a well-rounded education that meets their unique needs at each stage of their academic journey.

As a Middle Childhood teacher educator at Ohio University since 2003, I believe I can vouch for the effective professional education our Middle Childhood teacher candidates receive through our teacher preparation program.

While I was chair of the department, we were required to redesign our Early Childhood Education program from preK-3 to preK-5. This required significant effort on our part and now that we have just completed this transition, HB 33 requires us to yet again to redesign our [now] Early and Elementary Education [preK-5] program to preK-8, in effect virtually terminating the Middle Childhood Education [4-9] program.

The Middle Childhood Education program specifically meets the unique developmental needs of the whole child in the 4-9th grade age group in a holistic approach that vastly differs from the needs of preK-5 students. Creating a preK-8 grade band will only dilute the focus on pedagogical and content knowledge of our teacher candidates and will by necessity result in the same when it comes to what are now the upper grade levels [6-9] in the Middle Childhood Education program.

SB 219 retains the provision from the budget bill, allowing districts to employ educators to teach outside of the designated grade band by not more than two grade levels and for not more than two school years at a time. This flexibility is crucial in addressing the dynamic needs of our schools, promoting cross-grade collaboration, and allowing educators to contribute their expertise where it is most needed.

In supporting SB 219, you will demonstrate your commitment to fostering a climate that best meets the educational outcomes for Ohio's middle school students.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

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

Frans H. Doppen, Professor  
Ohio University  
The Patton College of Education

