

Testimony

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I have been teaching for forty years. The first fifteen in the public schools in Cincinnati and surrounding areas. I have also taught, conducted research and guided students wanting to become teachers for the past 20 years. I have seen quite a bit in my forty years. The changing of the licensure bands was surprising to me for several reasons:

There has been an increasing politicization of education in these forty years. In a field where my practice is based upon the research and existing knowledge base it seems many decisions have become political footballs. I believe this is one of those. It makes no sense, when you look at the research and consider the preponderance of the evidence, to group licensure from P-8, or P-12. In most cases the developmental research will uncover that there is a marked difference between the way preschoolers learn and the way 8th graders learn. To master all of the content, and contextual knowledge necessary to meet the needs of this broad range of children is impossible and misguided. When the P-3 licensure changed to P-5 we at the university level struggled to adapt our course work to accommodate 4th and 5th grades. It is at this 4/5 grade range that content becomes very important and if the students are prepared well in these years 6th grade and on go much more smoothly. This adjustment was difficult but we made the adjustments and feel prepared to prepare our future teachers to teach within the P-5 range. It is not optimal, there are developmental realities making this a very heavy lift, but we feel we have made the adjustment. To add an additional 3 years to this license, we feel makes this adaptation untenable and would render the license meaningless.

Take for example the teaching of reading or math. A tremendous amount of time is spent in acquiring the content knowledge necessary to teach these subjects. This requires not only knowing the fundamental content but also the meaning of it, the process of students learning it and the special accommodations needed for learners struggling to learn the content. This was a difficult task when we were covering P-3, a significant challenge with P-5. With P-8, it is untenable given the 4-year time frame of college. Adding years to the university process for students is untenable as well. What will inevitably happen is the quality of the teachers we produce will be wanting at just the time we need more qualified, more talented teachers.

We have made the adjustments at the P-5 licensure level. At Xavier University we are able to produce highly trained and qualified students. Changing the bands yet again is developmentally inappropriate and unrealistic in a practical sense. In the Jesuit tradition we strive for rigor in all of our academic endeavors. This proposed change will make rigor almost unattainable. This will lead to the creation of ill prepared technicians as opposed to rigorously trained intellectuals.

I will also say that many times decisions like these seem to be made for reasons other than what is best for children. It may be expedient politically or cheaper for districts. The research is very clear. Teaching is a developmentally based process. The child can only learn with the tools they have at a given age. Preparing teachers to teach all developmental levels is unrealistic at best and damaging at worst. There is already a tremendous teacher shortage. Adding this unattainable licensure and expertise is not only misguided but I believe ethically wrong.

Finally, I can't imagine another profession where politicians feel so free to meddle. This would never happen to medical doctors, or lawyers. Changing the fundamental truths of a profession by people not trained in that profession would not be acceptable to the AMA or the Bar Association. But it is with teaching and teacher preparation. I believe it is exactly this type of manipulation that leads to fewer and fewer young people wanting to teach. Why would you risk going into a field that drastically changes from year to year and pays so little? It is also the clear headed, "stop the madness" thinking of representatives like Senator Ingram that might stop this legislative steamroller of change to the teaching profession. Senator Ingram reached out to people like me for guidance. That is rare and very much appreciated by the profession. We have a saying at Xavier School of Education, "There is no significant learning without significant relationships". It is a foundational principle of all we do here. It is also obvious Senator Ingram follows this same edict. I wish the republicans in the house would consider this value as well.

Sincerely,

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