

**Senate Education Committee**  
**Senate Bill 219: Proponent Testimony**  
**Miss Bailey Balderson**  
**Primary Education (P-5) Licensure Candidate, University of Mount Union**  
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Chair Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Ingram, and distinguished members of the Senate Education Committee, on behalf of the Ohio Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, I appreciate the chance to offer testimony for Senate Bill 219.

My name is Bailey Balderson, and I come before you today as a post baccalaureate Education Major at the University of Mount Union. I will graduate this Saturday with a degree in Primary Education PK-5. Previously I graduated from the University of Mount Union in 2021 with a degree in Communications. After working in the field for over a year and a half I decided to return to the University of Mount Union to pursue my degree in Primary Education.

Returning to pursue a second degree was a decision I did not take lightly. However, it was an easy choice for me because I knew that the field of education would be incredibly fulfilling. The prospect of helping young students learn and achieve filled me with purpose and drive. Moreover, I had a clear understanding of the courses I needed to take and the timeframe it would take to complete them.

In my pursuit of becoming an educator, I am proud to obtain a license in PK-5 education. My passion lies in teaching elementary education, particularly nurturing and guiding young minds in their formative years. However, I must admit, if the license had been extended to PK-8, I would have hesitated to embark on this journey.

Allow me to elaborate on why the PK-5 license is essential to me. I consider myself well equipped to teach this grade band. My training and specialization revolve around teaching literacy and numeracy skills tailored specifically for students in grades PK-5. This focus has allowed me to delve deep into the science of reading which is critical in early childhood education.

Conversely, extending the license to PK-8 would have required me to undertake additional courses and specialize in content areas beyond my scope of interest. While I value education PK through 12, my passion lies firmly within the PK-5 grade band. Dedicating time and resources to specialize beyond this range would not only have elongated my educational journey, but I would have also felt that I was spending money on coursework that I would never choose to utilize, such as middle school content coursework.

If the grade bands were to revert back to PK-8 this would mean less time in the field in a student's particular areas of interest. Practicum experiences in real classroom settings are crucial in exposing education majors to the realities of day to day operations. Extending licensure to eighth grade would require adjustments in these practicum experiences to provide exposure to middle school environments. I can say both the quantity and quality of my PK-5 clinical experiences have prepared me to lead my own classroom with confidence. If I were to spread this experience out over three more grade levels I believe the quality of the experiences would be diminished due to time constraints of completing a degree in four years.

Maintaining the current grade licensure bands is essential for ensuring quality education for both aspiring educators and their future students. These grade bands provide clear and focused pathways for educators to develop expertise in specific age groups and subject areas. Aspiring educators can concentrate their studies on the unique developmental needs and academic requirements of a condensed grade band, allowing them to gain in-depth knowledge and specialized skills essential for effective teaching.

In conclusion, Senate Bill 219, which maintains the educator license grade bands, is essential in ensuring that aspiring educators like myself can pursue their passions with clarity and purpose. Preserving the PK-5 license cultivates expertise in specialized areas of teaching, ultimately benefiting our students.

Chair Brenner and members of the committee, I thank you for considering my testimony in support of Senate Bill 219. I urge you to support this bill, which upholds the integrity of educator licensure. I am happy to answer any questions you might have.