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**Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee**

**May 31, 2023**

**Testimony on HB 33**

**Jennifer Glenn, Ohio School Psychologists Association**

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on HB 33. As a school psychologist and as president-elect of the Ohio School Psychologists Association, I support the inclusion of \$162 million in the budget proposal to provide for the implementation of the science of reading across the state. This allocation will provide access for all students to high-quality reading curriculum materials combined with highly trained educators. I am also in support of eliminating the legal requirement for retention under the Third Grade Reading Guarantee (TGRG), including for this year's third grade class. These two issues really go hand-in-hand.

Decades of research in early reading instruction has resulted in scientifically-based approaches to reading instruction. Reading programs that provide developmentally appropriate, intensive, and direct instruction strategies to promote the reading skills of all children, but particularly those who are low-performing readers or are at-risk of reading difficulties, should be used across the state. Governor DeWine's proposal of allocating \$162 million to support the implementation of the science of reading across the state will provide access for all students to high-quality reading curricula and highly trained educators.

Most studies conducted over the past four decades on the effectiveness of grade retention did not find it to be successful in remediating academic deficits (e.g., Andrew, 2014; Fruehwirth et al., 2016). Potential disadvantages of grade retention for failure to pass a high stakes reading test include: simple repetition of an entire grade level of curriculum, including areas in which the child is successful; negative impact on social-emotional well-being (e.g., self-concept, self-confidence, academic motivation, behavior, and interpersonal relationships); and the extra costs associated with retention to families, school districts, and the government (Goos et.al, 2021). Without specific, targeted interventions that address their specific needs, most retained children do not catch up to their non-retained peers (Jimerson, 2001). Removing the retention requirement, including for this year's current third grade students, will remove stressors for children, educators, and families, and will allow more instructional time to be spent on teaching children how to read, rather than on how to take tests.

This year's third grade class had their kindergarten year cut short by the pandemic, and many spent their first grade year in remote learning for at least part of the year (if they had access to it). Their foundational years of reading instruction were disrupted by circumstances well beyond the control of their families or school systems; these students should not be punished with the detrimental effects of retention.

*"Building Bridges for the Future"*



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There is also evidence of significant ethnic and racial disparities in retention rates. Black and Hispanic children are retained at higher rates than their White peers (Peguero et al., 2021), even when school characteristics, such as availability of school resources or whether the school is in an urban, suburban, or rural community are accounted for (Peguero et al., 2021). These same groups were also disproportionately affected by school closures during the pandemic, and were more likely to not be able to access remote learning. In order to provide all Ohio students with the best chance at success in learning to read, and therefore access to the doors that that skill opens, they must be provided with consistent access to research-based reading instruction, without the negative effects resulting from retention.

In addition, the Ohio School Psychologists Association is in support of the Fair School Funding Plan with the revisions made by the House. Specifically, to extend the operation of the school financing system established by H.B. 110 of the 134th General Assembly to FY 2024 and FY 2025 using the most current data to establish base costs per pupil, including but not limited to updating the input factors to the Fair School Funding Plan. In some instances, this will be from FY 2022, and in some it will be from FY 2024. Ensuring that then-current data are used to establish base costs will support the goal of providing for equitable opportunities and a successful future for all Ohio students, regardless of their ZIP code.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the allocation of funding to promote the science of reading, of the removal of the retention requirement from the Third Grade Reading Guarantee, beginning with this year's current third grade students, and of the continued implementation of the Fair School Funding Plan using the most then-current data available. I am happy to answer any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

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