

Senate Finance Committee
Proponent Testimony
HB 33 Third Grade Reading Guarantee Provisions
May 31, 2023

Good morning Chairman Dolan, Vice Chairman Cirino, and members of the Senate Finance Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak on HB 33. My name is Jim Galon.

My son Hawkin is perhaps the happiest and kindest child I've ever met- sure I'm biased. He is the first to ask an opponent on the soccer field if he is ok. He is always smiling and often shares that he doesn't want to grow up. When I ask why he simply says, "I love my life."

Last Monday on my way to a work trip I got a call from my wife. I said hello and immediately heard literal weeping on the other end of the line. Hawk had just found out he didn't pass the state test- he missed by less than 10 points. His realizing it's a real possibility to fail third grade broke him in a way that I have never seen.

There are several areas that don't line up for me with this law- for example, my son passed the "I ready" assessment and hit his stretch targets for the year. This assessment has been chosen by my district as an alternative to the state test for promotion. This test also is administered several times during the year. But the district could only chose one of those testing dates for promotion status. Hawk passed the assessment at another time and had a high enough score to be promoted. To me this doesn't make logical sense.

And if that wasn't enough, both his teacher and the principal have let me know that Hawk is absolutely ready for 4th grade.

I've personally known 3 kids that have failed a school grade. 2 of them have been in and out of jail and the other didn't attend college and isn't giving back to his community. I am terribly concerned that this would change the trajectory of Hawk's life, and I imagine that this situation is not isolated.

I struggled with school too- specifically the high-stakes pressure testing. I imagine if this reading guarantee was in place when I was in school, I would have not passed, and my life would undoubtedly be very different.

What should you do? I don't know; I'm not an educator so I will leave it up to them for their suggestions. But this process is broken, and I am confident that you will help with a remedy that balances getting kids the help they need without risking changing the course of their entire life.

Please support the change in Substitute House Bill 33 that would remove only the mandatory requirement to retain a student in third grade from Ohio's Third Grade Reading Guarantee laws.

Thank you for your time and thank you for this opportunity. I will be happy to answer your questions.