



**Senate Finance Committee
House Bill 33 Written Proponent Testimony
Buckeye Association of School Administrators
Ohio Association of School Business Officials
Ohio School Boards Association
Ohio Association of Elementary School Administrators
May 31, 2023**

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of the literacy and Third Grade Reading Guarantee (TGRG) provisions in Substitute House Bill (Sub. HB) 33.

As you know, our organizations represent public school district superintendents, treasurers/CFOs, business managers and other school business officials, boards of education, and elementary school principals from around the state. Sub. HB 33 proposes a positive change for many young students, and on behalf of our members, we urge the Senate to retain the current version of the bill related to literacy and improvement in serving struggling readers.

Sub. HB 33 removes the legal mandate, under the TGRG, that requires third grade students be retained if they do not achieve the required score on the third grade English language arts assessment. We believe eliminating this mandate is a positive step in the best interest of students.

The bill does not remove a school district's obligation to provide the necessary instruction, intervention and remediation services to students reading below grade level. However, the bill recognizes that holding a third grader back, regardless of the wishes of the parents and the professional view of the teacher, has the potential to set that student up for future failure. Under current law, parents have no choice in the matter.

Opponents to the elimination of the TGRG mandatory retention provision have asked for assurances that schools be accountable for making sure students learn to read. They've expressed fears that without the statewide mandate to retain students who fail the third grade test, the result will be the social promotion of students with no incentive for schools to do better.

Sub. HB 33 ensures that students will not be socially promoted and forgotten. While we believe school leaders and educators are already laser focused on helping students succeed in reading, the bill requires that provisions from the TGRG, such as the requirement for reading improvement and monitoring plans for students identified as reading below grade level, will stay with struggling readers at least through fifth grade. The bill also extends the focus on phonics and other evidence based teaching tools beyond third grade.

Our members have pointed out they believe the new dyslexia laws that are currently in the implementation process will have a positive impact on student achievement in reading and we agree. Further, Sub. HB 33 also includes significant changes for Ohio around the Science of Reading which our organizations strongly support.

The changes in Sub. HB 33 around literacy will serve to set up a system which will strengthen the goals of the TGRG. These changes coupled with the elimination of the mandate to retain struggling third graders will provide the flexibility needed for educators and parents to do the right thing for students. Individual students will receive services and support tailored to their specific needs.

Ohio law has helped to make significant progress in meeting the needs of struggling readers. Sub. HB 33 continues that progress and ensures that parents are included. Requirements would not be relaxed with the bill's removal of the mandate to retain third graders. While it may be necessary to hold back a student based on other factors, retaining a student based on a high stakes test appears to be a punishment rather than a solution.

We have appreciated the flexibility afforded districts by the legislature during the last three school years. It has allowed educators, school leaders, and parents to decide what was best for students on a case-by-case basis as to whether or not to promote students to the fourth grade. This flexibility would be continued through Sub. HB 33, giving those closest to the children the ability to make decisions based on what is best for them.

We urge the committee to approve the literacy and TGRG provisions in Sub. HB 33 as a positive step for students across Ohio.

Feel free to contact us with questions.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Shaner, OAESA
Paul Imhoff, BASA
Jennifer Hogue, OSBA
Katie Johnson, OASBO