

Testimony of Belinda Spinosi
Before the Ohio House of Representatives Education Committee
Representative Sarah Fowler Arthur, Chair
March 5, 2025

Chair Fowler Arthur, Vice Chair Odioso, Ranking Member Robinson, and Education Committee Members:

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Belinda Spinosi. I am a Disability Advocate and a Parent Mentor from Columbus, where half of my work is in education.

Today's education system was built in the method that educators learn in, not in all the methods that humans learn in. The entire need for additional services for students with disabilities indicates that the education system was built wrong.

After Dayton, August 2019, the Statehouse collectively came to understand the connection of an appropriate education for students with disabilities to our public outcomes. The General Assembly made great progress by supporting the settlement of the 30-year special education lawsuit, passed comprehensive dyslexia legislation which set out a process for screening all students and educating teachers, and deinstitutionalized people with development disabilities. You also passed the Science of Reading initiatives. Thank you and I am proud of you for your work. But the job is not done in special education.

In my advocacy I have noted two major trends which continue to devastate our ability to educate every Ohio student.

Universities and colleges are not willing to educate all future teachers and professors on how to educate students with disabilities, and at the bachelor level.

Ohio hires teachers at the bachelor level, and less, but special education training does not happen at most campuses until a master's degree. Allowing unprepared teachers to enter classrooms disadvantages students, teachers, and public outcomes.

<https://highered.ohio.gov/educators/academic-programs-policies/academic-program-approval/educator-preparation/ed-prep-introduction>

<https://highered.ohio.gov/educators/academic-programs-policies/academic-program-approval/educator-preparation/education-program-finder>

Superintendents and teachers tell me it is unfair to ask them to participate in an equivalent of a master's degree when they have a full teaching load. The problem with this argument is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, (Pub. L. No. 101-476, 104 Stat., passed October 30, 1990; the Americans with Disabilities Act, passed July 26, 1990; Child Find has been part of

special education law since 1975, [Public Law 94-142](#),: and PBIS, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports was passed in 1997 when IDA was reauthorized.

<https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/About/Annual-Reports/2021-2022-PBIS-Legislative-Report.pdf.aspx?lang=en-US> Today's superintendents and teachers have always known they had the mandate to educate every student.

- **Teachers could be mandated to catch up on the special education course work needed and externally report for each special education program.**
- **And after a certain date teachers cannot be hired unless they have the requisite training.**

Ohio State University professors continue to sue the State of Ohio and Governor DeWine to be exempted from the Science of Reading method, that you already have passed into law.

<https://readingrecovery.org/press-release/>

The lack of appropriate oversight over existing special education directives continues to allow students to fail and to remain missing from school all together.

Ohio's Special Education Profiles do not get to a guarantee that every student with a disability will receive an appropriate education, nor does it explain why every student is not graduating or even in school. <https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Special-Education/Special-Education-Data-and-Funding/Ohio-s-Special-Education-Profiles> It is misleading to *not* explain why educators are not fully implementing Child Find and requiring every teacher to be appropriately trained. <https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Special-Education/Special-Education-Monitoring-System/State-Determinations>

<https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Special-Education/State-Performance-Plan>

What the Department of Education and teachers are responding to is transactional, what they choose to report. **This Education Committee could set new standards, setting your own team to directly oversee special education and responsible data.**

The Ohio Department of Education and Workforce Development does not have the capability to do appropriate oversight.

If we change course, educating every Ohioan would provide an opportunity to participate in the economy at a time when employers are begging for workers.

Please ask universities and colleges to educate teachers in their bachelor's degrees how to educate students with disabilities and provide external direct oversight over the full implementation of special education. We need to mandate that educators learn how to educate every student.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.