

Opponent Testimony for 523

Ohio House Education Committee

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Avery Smith, Student

Marietta College

Chair Fowler Arthur, Vice-Chair Odioso, Ranking Member Brennan, and Members of the Ohio House Education Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Avery Smith, and I am a sophomore education student at Marietta College. I am currently Preparing to teach grades 7-12 English/Language Arts and Special Education while also completing a minor in Creative Writing and a Teacher Leadership Certificate. But most importantly, I am a student teacher. I am writing today to express my support for Ohio House Bill 523 in its entirety and to advocate for its passage because I believe it strengthens educational policy and directly impacts the classrooms where future teachers like me are learning to lead.

During my field placements, I have had the opportunity to plan lessons, assess student work, and support diverse learners under the guidance of my mentor teachers. I have experienced what I can only describe as simply a sample of the real teaching profession. Everyday I work with the same group of students. I have gotten to know their interests, hobbies, and their favorite books to read. I have seen firsthand how much effort it takes to get to know these individuals. It takes a lot of time to put forth a good impression and be not only their teacher, but their friend. As someone preparing to enter this profession full-time, I think often about the kind of environment I will step into next year. Policies like House Bill 523 help shape that environment. They determine whether new educators begin their careers in a system that supports effective teaching and prioritizes student learning. For me, this bill represents a commitment to building classrooms where both teachers and students can succeed.

Beyond my own experience, this bill would affect aspiring educators across Ohio, as well as the students and families in our local communities. Teacher preparation programs are filled with passionate individuals who want to remain in Ohio and serve our schools, but many of my peers have concerns about entering a profession that can feel increasingly complex and under strain. Student teaching is a full-time professional responsibility, yet most preservice teachers are required to complete it without pay while still covering tuition, housing, and transportation costs. These financial burdens discourage a lot of young educators from finishing their courses or even entering the teaching profession at all. This takes away from the diverse and talented candidates needed in high-need and rural districts. Legislation that promotes structure, accountability, and sustainability sends a powerful message that Ohio values both student learning and educator support. In communities like mine—where schools are central to opportunity and growth—policies that strengthen education systems benefit not only students but also families, local economies, and the broader workforce.

I respectfully ask that you support Ohio House Bill 523 to invest in future educators and the long-term success of Ohio's students. Thank you for your time and for your commitment to education in our state.