



Ohio School Counselor Association

Chair Fowler-Arthur, Vice Chair Odioso, Ranking Member Brennan, and members of the House Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide interested party testimony on HB 523. I appreciate the opportunity to provide interested party testimony on behalf of the Ohio School Counselors Association. The Ohio School Counselor Association represents and advocates for the interests of professional school counselors in Ohio.

House Bill 523, the Future Educators Support Act, provides educational and testing support for student teachers, without imposing mandates on higher education institutions or local districts. The Ohio School Counselor Association appreciates the intention of this bill and requests that the sponsors consider adding school counselors to the bill language.

To obtain professional licensure, school counselors must complete a 60 credit master's degree, a 100 hour practicum, and a 600 hour school-based internship typically requiring about 20 unpaid hours per week. Notably, these requirements exceed the credit and internship hours needed for principal and superintendent licensure.

Many full-time students are required to maintain part-time employment in order to close significant financial gaps while enrolled in graduate programs. While employment provides necessary income, it creates substantial barriers when students are simultaneously required to complete practicum and internship experiences — both of which demand consistent daytime availability, emotional labor, and professional presence. When students must work extended hours simply to survive, they are unable to fully engage in the rich, immersive clinical and educational training experiences that prepare them to serve Ohio's youth effectively. The structure of practicum and internship requirements often assumes financial stability that many graduate students simply do not have. As a result, students may miss critical training opportunities, reduce their availability in schools, or experience heightened stress that impacts both their learning and their well-being.

Many school counseling students must take unpaid leave from their jobs to complete internships, creating financial strain and potentially affecting their retirement benefits. For full-time graduate students, the program's length and cost are additional barriers. The structure of practicum and internship requirements often assumes financial stability that many graduate students simply do not have. As a result, students may miss critical training opportunities, reducing their availability. Providing financial support during the internship year similar to what student teachers receive would help reduce these challenges. Some school counseling graduate students are even relying on public assistance to make ends meet, which we have heard first hand from a practicum student working with one of our board members, underscoring the need for this support.

Attracting more students into school counseling programs is essential to ensuring that schools can replace professionals who are retiring, leaving the field, or whose positions remain unfilled. The American School Counselor Association recommends a student-to-school counselor ratio of 250:1 to effectively support students' academic, social-emotional, and career development needs.

However, based on data from 2024-2025 in Ohio, the current ratio stands at 380:1, ranking the state 32nd nationally.

This significant gap highlights the urgent need to strengthen the pipeline of trained school counselors. Increasing the number of school counselors not only reduces caseloads and improves individualized student support, but also directly aligns with Ohio's legislative priorities to better prepare students for college and career pathways after high school. By investing in school counseling education programs and workforce development initiatives, Ohio can move closer to the recommended ratio and ensure that every student receives the guidance and resources necessary for long-term success.

The Ohio School Counselor Association appreciates Representative Manning and Representative Brennan's dedication to investing in the future of education in Ohio and strengthening the education pipeline. We kindly request that the sponsors add school counselors to the bill to support all professionals preparing to enter the Ohio education system.

Sincerely,

Heather Fairs
Government Relations Committee Chair
Ohio School Counselor Association