



Senate Education Committee
Proponent Testimony for S. B. No. 144
Melissa Cropper, President of the Ohio Federation of Teachers
October 7, 2025

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Ingram, and committee members, I am Melissa Cropper, President of the Ohio Federation of Teachers (OFT). OFT proudly represents teachers in traditional and charter schools, support staff, higher education faculty and staff, library employees, and other public employees across Ohio. Thank you for the opportunity to express our support for SB 144.

Restoring Ohio's teacher licensing requirements to the 2018 standards is paramount for safeguarding our state's ongoing commitment to educational excellence. These grade bands uphold benchmarks of proficiency, knowledge, and skills essential for educators to lead classrooms and inspire young minds effectively.

In September 2018, legislation established the previous grade bands at Pre-K-5, 4-9, and 7-12. These grade bands guaranteed that our teachers had the expertise needed in their subject matter, pedagogy, instructional strategies, and classroom management to cultivate an environment conducive to learning and growth. On the other hand, the wider grade bands which we changed to do not take into account the vast difference in age groups and the specific skills needed at each grade level, making it harder for teachers to become highly skilled for a particular age group. This, of course, is at the expense of the students.

While we sympathize with the difficulties superintendents have had in filling positions, the current wider grade bands do not solve the problem. The wider grade bands do nothing to increase the number of people entering the profession and could potentially have the opposite effect of keeping people out of the profession for fear that they may be placed in a grade level that is out of their comfort zone (for example, someone who loves early elementary grades potentially being moved into a middle school position). In addition, moving away from the 2018 grade bands has been, and continues to be, disruptive for the training and development of new teachers.

Ohio can help foster stability and clarity for educators, and ensure students have the teachers best suited for them, by quickly reverting back to the 2018 grade bands, which were put in place after a deliberative process that included stakeholder input.

Thank you, and I welcome any questions you may have.