

To: Sponsor & Ranking Member, Senator Catherine Ingram, Chair Senator, Andrew Brenner, Vice Chair, Senator Louis Blessing, III and all esteemed Senate Education Committee members.

From: Dr. Trisha Prunty Ed.D., BGSU Associate Professor IEC Dual Licensure program Pk-grade 5 Elementary Education and Pk-Grade 5 Special Education

Date: 10/11/2025

Memo: In regards SB 144: Educator Licensure Bands

Subject: The Critical Need to Maintain Dual Licensure in Teacher Preparation Programs

Thank you for this opportunity to provide written testimony on Senate Bill 144. I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the recent changes to teacher licensure creating Pk-8 single licensure. This change effectively eliminates the dual licensure pathway for both PK–Grade 5 Special Education and PK–Grade 5 Elementary Education. Eliminating dual licensure programs will exacerbate the shortage of special education providers in Ohio.

At Bowling Green State University (BGSU), the dual licensure program is one of the largest teacher preparation programs within the College of Education. It has consistently produced highly qualified teachers licensed in both special education and elementary education, ready to serve Ohio's classrooms. Senate Bill 144 can help ensure the continuation of these essential programs by explicitly including PK–Grade 5 dual licensure in both special education and elementary education within the statute. This addition would provide the legal framework necessary to support and sustain teacher preparation programs that are responsive to the needs of Ohio's schools and students.

As an educator with 42 years of experience including 32 years in public education as a special education teacher, elementary teacher, and elementary principal, and 10 years at Bowling Green State University regional Firelands campus. I have seen firsthand the value and necessity of this dual licensure teacher preparation program. These graduates are consistently in high demand. In fact, nearly 80% of our BGSU Firelands 2025 graduates were hired as special education teachers and all graduates were hired no later than July of 2025. Districts clearly value the dual licensure preparation. One local superintendent recently shared at our advisory board meeting that he always prefers hiring elementary teachers with dual licensure. These teachers are better prepared to meet the unique needs of all learners in today's classroom especially students with disabilities and students requiring differentiated instruction. SB 144 can ensure the continuation of dual licensure teacher preparation programs by simply adding Pk-Grade 5 dual licensure (special and elementary education) into the statute.

The shortage of special education teachers is well-documented both nationally and in Ohio. According to the Learning Policy Institute's 2025 Overview of Teacher Shortages, "Special education is the most commonly reported area of shortage in 45 states". ODEW's own Teacher Workforce Report highlights a decline in newly credentialed teachers and an increase in classrooms being led by educators who are not certified in the areas they teach. Removing the dual licensure option will only magnify these shortages and further jeopardize the quality of education for students with disabilities.

Higher education teacher preparation program's dual licensure is a commitment to educational equity and excellence. These graduates are ready to serve in multiple roles across districts, giving administrators flexibility and students access to highly qualified educators.

I urge decision-makers to consider the preservation of dual licensure programs which ensures licensed special education by adding it to SB 144. It is imperative that Ohio continue preparing educators with the skills and credentials needed to serve all students particularly our students with disabilities.

Thank you for your time and attention to this urgent matter. I would welcome the opportunity to speak further with you about the impact of this legislative change and the critical role dual licensure plays in Ohio's teacher pipeline.

Sincerely,
Dr. Trisha Prunty Ed.D.

Dr. Trisha Prunty Ed.D.
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References:

BGSU IEC Dual Licensure Program <https://www.bgsu.edu/academics/inclusive-early-childhood-education.html>
<https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Research-Evaluation-and-Advanced-Analytics/Data-Insights/Ohio-s-Teacher-Workforce>
<https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/overview-teacher-shortages-2025-factsheet>

WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

Please complete the Witness Information Form before testifying:

Date: 10/10/2025

Name: Dr. Trisha Prunty Ed.D.

Are you representing: Yourself Organization

Organization (If Applicable):

Position/Title: Associate Professor in IEC Dual Licensure Program

Home Address: 990 South State Route 19

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Do you wish to be added to the committee notice email distribution list? Yes No

Business before the committee

Legislation (Bill/Resolution Number): SB 144 Teacher Licensure Bands

Specific Issue: Dual Licensure Programs for Teachers PK-Grade 5 Elementary & Special Education

Are you testifying as a: Proponent Opponent Interested Party

Will you have a written statement, visual aids, or other material to distribute? Yes No

(If yes, please send an electronic version of the documents, if possible, to the Chair's

office prior to committee. You may also submit hard copies to the Chair's staff prior to committee.)

Will your testimony be written, spoken, or both? Written

Please provide a brief statement on your position: I am writing regarding the recent changes to teacher licensure creating Pk-8 single licensure which will eliminate the dual licensure pathway for both PK-Grade 5 Special Education and PK-Grade 5 Elementary Education. Without dual licensure programs providing special education teachers, there will be a greater shortage of special education providers in Ohio.

Please be advised that this form and any materials (written or otherwise) submitted or presented to this committee are records that may be requested by the public and may be published online.