



**OACTE, OAPCTE, and SUED
Proponent Testimony for Substitute S.B. 144
Senate Education Committee
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Chair Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Melissa Askren Edgehouse, and I am here today as President of the Ohio Association of Private Colleges of Teacher Education (OAPCTE), the organization that supports all private Educator Preparation Programs in Ohio. I am speaking on behalf of OAPCTE, as well as the Ohio Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (OACTE) and the State University Education Deans (SUED)--the three organizations that collectively represent the 50 educator preparation programs across Ohio.

I am here to provide proponent testimony for substitute S.B. 144, as OACTE, OAPCTE, and SUED support this amended bill.

First, we fully recognize and appreciate the staffing challenges of middle school administrators. Small schools could feasibly have two sixth-grade teachers: One teacher who instructs mathematics and science, and another educator who teaches English language arts and social studies. When the math and science teacher retires or leaves the position, that school's principal could be faced with two fantastic, yet unqualified candidates, as they could be credentialed for mathematics and English language arts or mathematics and social studies. Neither candidate has the necessary license for the vacancy, and that district's students will suffer as a result.

Scenarios similar to this occur in grades 6-8, in particular, across the state. While Educator Preparation Programs value the breadth and depth of content knowledge we believe is important in the middle grades, we also recognize that educator shortages, especially when coupled with credentialing misalignment, have proven ineffective for so many districts. Instead, we've advocated for a solution, one that isn't nearly as cumbersome as P-8 with so many grade levels and so many

content areas. Rather, restoring the P-5 grade band, along with adding a P-5 dual inclusive license that prepares preservice teachers for both general education and special education, satisfies the many needs of Ohio's young children. Teachers of the early grades can continue to focus on the science of reading, high-quality mathematics instruction, and more. Further, this substitute bill revises the prior grades 4-9 middle childhood license, where only two concentration areas were required (such as mathematics and science, or social studies and science), to a comprehensive grades 4-8 license, where preservice teacher candidates earn credentials in all four core content areas: ELA, math, social studies, and science. In the previous scenario, where the middle school principal had fantastic applicants for a math and science position, with this amended bill, all middle childhood applicants would be credentialed to take on the open role.

The return to a P-5 grade band, coupled with a comprehensive, generalist grades 4-8 band, would help our Educator Preparation Programs immensely. A P-8 curriculum could easily scare off candidates, as those who are deeply committed to teaching young children in preschool, kindergarten, and first grade would then still need to pass courses and licensure exam content surrounding calculus, college geometry, the history of mathematics, and more. We fear that the courses wouldn't be desirable to those who want to teach young children, and we fear that the licensure exams would prove to be more than challenging to these candidates. In other words, the educator shortages that districts are witnessing now would worsen in no time. Further, our Educator Preparation Programs would have difficulty offering a dual license, where candidates could earn credentials to teach both P-8 general education and P-8 intervention specialist or special education. This simply would not be feasible in four years and 120 credit hours. We know that one of the greatest staffing needs in Ohio's school systems is finding teachers with a license in special education. A P-8 structure would undoubtedly reduce the number of intervention specialists completing our programs.

We have been working diligently to integrate the science of reading in our programs, and we're committed to high-quality mathematics and science instruction, and we know the importance of civics instruction, and we are challenged, every day, to do what we can to ensure our faculty and candidates are utilizing artificial intelligence both ethically and responsibly, so they can increase efficiency and model best practices. Changing grade bands to P-5, grades 4-8 general education, and 7-12 will vitally assist us to continue these efforts and ultimately do what's best for Ohio's children.

Ranking Member Ingram, thank you so much for sponsoring S.B. 144, and Chair Brenner, thank you so much for writing and supporting an amendment. Your support is greatly appreciated by our 50 Educator Preparation Programs across Ohio.

Chair Brenner, members of the Committee, thank you for your time. I am happy to answer questions you may have.