

Proponent Testimony  
SB 144 – Educator License Grade Bands  
October 14, 2025

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Ingram, and other members of the Senate Education Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to give testimony and evidence in favor of the amended Senate Bill 144. I've been teaching math and math education courses at Youngstown State University for 33 years. I taught courses for prospective teachers in the former 1-8 comprehensive degree program. When the separate licenses for P-3 (now P-5) and 4-9 were proposed, university faculty were told that the reason for the change was that administrators were finding that with a comprehensive license spanning such a large number of grades, candidates were not fully prepared to teach some of the middle grades contents (particularly math).

With a 4-9 dual content degree, a teacher candidate takes approximately 9-10 content courses in two subjects and only 2-3 content courses in the remaining two subjects. This prepares them fully to teach the two subjects of their choice. With a P-8 comprehensive degree, content will be reduced to approximately 3-4 courses per subject area. This means that with a P-8 degree, candidates will be approximately 1/3 as well prepared for any particular content as they would have been if the dual subject middle grades license hadn't been eliminated. Candidates will only be prepared to teach middle grades subjects for which they have natural aptitude and interests, and some candidates will graduate not fully prepared to teach any middle grades content. It simply is not possible to fully prepare a future teacher with both the content and the methodology they would need to be ready to teach all of the P-8 content at all of those grade levels. The replacement of P-5 (four contents) and 4-9 (two contents) with P-8 (all four contents) is essentially combining three separate university degrees.

Also, many teacher candidates have strong desires for a specific age range of students, and many do not want a P-8 or 7-12 license. In the May 7, 2024 testimony of SB 219, there were preservice teacher candidates who specifically said in their testimony that they would have chosen something else or not taken a job opportunity outside of their license years. In a statewide IRB approved survey, approximately 1/4 of the current teacher candidates in Ohio stated that they would have left Ohio or left education rather than to select between P-8 and 6-12. We can not afford to lose that many potential teachers!

Please consider supporting the amended bill Senate Bill 144 to reinstate the P-5 (Dual intervention specialist and general education) and create a 4-8 comprehensive license. With a 4-8 comprehensive license, candidates will graduate better prepared in all four contents than with a P-8 comprehensive license. Research has shown that Middle Grades students perform better when taught by teachers who are well prepared in the subjects that they are teaching. The ability to choose between Primary and Middle grades is likely to keep a good portion of potential teacher candidates from leaving education or leaving Ohio to get a Primary or Middle Grades license in another state. A P-8 grade band structure will dissuade a large portion of potential teachers from entering the profession, hence exacerbating the existing teacher shortage, and will result in less effective teachers and teaching. Separate licenses for P-5 Dual Intervention Specialist and 4-8 Middle Grades will address the teacher placement issues that initiated the creation of the P-8 license and will produce more effective middle grades teachers than the P-8 license (but less effective middle grades teachers than the former 4-9 dual content option). Please consider supporting the amended SB 144 bill.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify,

Anita C. O'Mellan, Ph.D.  
Professor of Mathematics and Teacher Education  
Youngstown State University