

Written Testimony on HB 64 to the House Finance Committee  
Submitted by: Ann Brennan, Executive Director  
Ohio School Psychologists Association  
March 25, 2015

Thank you Chairman Smith, Ranking member Driehaus and members of the committee for this opportunity to provide written testimony on HB 64. I am Ann Brennan, and I am the Executive Director of the Ohio School Psychologists Association. Our association represents over 900 school psychologists, working in Ohio's schools. School psychologists are highly trained in the multi-layered area of educational assessments, including: selecting which diagnostic assessments are best to use to determine a student's academic level and progress, assisting school based evaluation teams in interpreting assessment results, and using the data gleaned from assessments to both design interventions and monitor the progress students are making during the intervention period.

School psychologists rely on research when both recommending assessments, as well as expressing concerns when they are used improperly.

Before focusing on a few of the many important education related provisions in HB 64, I would first like to express OSPA's appreciation for the continued state funding of the school psychology intern program, included as a special education enhancement. This program is vital to the Ohio school psychology profession as it supports the ODE approved school psychology training programs by funding the intern placements in school districts. We are again experiencing shortages of school psychologists in parts of the state, the university training programs address these shortages by working in their geographic regions to determine where the unmet needs are, and then working with school districts to encourage them to become an approved intern site.

We would like to focus our comments on the following:

- Diagnostic assessment testing: We believe that testing limits be developed in a way that is meaningful rather than arbitrary and agree that this area needs thoughtful and deliberative study. OSPA opposes testing limitation mandates on diagnostic assessments or other curriculum based local measures of educational progress. These curriculum driven, short cycle formative assessments give educators the most useful information to determine where students are and how best to get them where they need to be. They also are designed to focus on particular strengths and weaknesses so that specific interventions can be designed to address them. Additionally they are the only type of assessments where progress towards the desired educational outcome can be tracked at regular intervals throughout the school year and then

compared to the benchmark data collected at the beginning of the assessment cycle. This progress monitoring informs educators whether the interventions are working, and if not, directs them to design different ones. It is not clear if all diagnostic assessments will be included in the testing limits contained in HB 64.

- Exempting high performing districts from teacher licensure and class size requirements: We do not support exempting high performing school districts from educator licensure standards or class size requirements. We do not believe that students will be well served by allowing unlicensed individuals to teach any subject or grade level. Teachers should be licensed in their content areas or grade level areas. We understand the notion that individuals expert in certain fields may want to become teachers and would recommend this be considered through a specific waiver process, rather than this carte blanche approach. OSPA also does not support exempting school districts from the class size requirements. School psychologists believe in reasonable class sizes for optimum student learning, regardless of the mixed bag of imperfect research on this issue, large class sizes seem absolutely counter intuitive. Research on improving mental health outcomes for students indicates where there is a more personal, mentoring relationship between students and teachers school climate and individual mental health is enhanced, the larger the class sizes the less likely this will occur.
- Special education funding: OSPA supports the Ohio Coalition for the Education of Students with Disabilities (OCECD) funding request, as it was generated from a research based cost study.
- ESC funding and related policy provisions: OSPA supports the subcommittee testimony presented by OESCA, including retaining current ESC funding levels as recommended by the State Board of Education; removing the provision that allows for high performing districts to opt out of the alignment to an ESC; as well as removing the provision that allows high performing districts to opt out of consulting with an ESC in the provision of special education services. ODE utilizes the ESC network through the State Regional Support teams to assist all districts with school improvement initiatives as well as other statewide training initiatives for all schools. These opt out provisions would be detrimental to this state system approach, as the ESC's provide invaluable services, especially in the special education area.
- Gifted funding: OSPA supports the OAGC recommendation to increase the level of accountability for gifted funding by requiring all districts to spend gifted funding in the foundation formula on identification and appropriately licensed gifted

personnel.

Lastly, OSPA has a long-standing position that opposes the use of a single indicator based on a high stakes test that is then tied to grade promotion or graduation as well as using such test results to evaluate educators or school districts. I've attached for your information a NASP position paper on this subject; although it was adopted before Ohio's new learning standards were developed the basic premises and research are still relevant. We believe there is a disconnect between the requirements in NCLB, IDEIA and state testing requirements as well as an over reliance on high stakes testing in our state accountability system. Although NCLB does require uniform standards and certain grade band testing, it does not require that states elevate those tests into a high stakes accountability system that in turn harms students. OSPA would like to explore alternatives that strike a better balance between accountability for school districts while also using appropriate, multiple measures, for assessing student achievement. We are also appreciative of the need to address the conflict between NCLB, IDEIA, and state law and rules with regard to the issue of the extended years students with disabilities have to graduate high school- this issue needs to be addressed in our state report card system.

Thank you for considering our views.

Ann Brennan, Executive Director  
OSPA  
4449 Easton Way, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Columbus, Ohio 43219  
614-414-5980