



Good morning, Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Skindell, and members of the Senate Finance Committee. Thank you for providing me the opportunity to testify today on House Bill 49.

My name is Matt Verber, and I am the Executive Director of Policy and Advocacy for Educopia, the vendor for Ohio's Resident Educator Summative Assessment.

For my testimony today, I would like to focus on the proposed repeal of Ohio Revised Code Section 3319.223, which would abolish the Ohio teacher residency program.

The Ohio Resident Educator Program, which began in 2011, is a four-year comprehensive induction program for beginning teachers who hold a Resident Educator license. The first two years of the program focus on providing Resident Educators instructional support and formative feedback on their teaching from qualified school-based mentors. During the third year of the program, Resident Educators take the Resident Educator Summative Assessment (RESA), which provides teachers the opportunity to demonstrate that they have the knowledge and skills needed to lead a classroom anywhere in the state. In the fourth and final year of the Resident Educator Program, teachers explore ways to become leaders in their buildings and districts. After successfully completing the Resident Educator Program and the RESA, teachers are qualified to advance to a professional license.

Ohio's comprehensive Resident Educator Program provides beginning teachers the support they need to develop in the profession and gain confidence through the consistent feedback of an experienced mentor and the necessary encouragement of a network of fellow Resident Educators. Being a new teacher is incredibly challenging, which makes having a strong mentor and peer group critically important. National studies confirm that:

- Beginning teachers who participate in mentoring programs have higher job satisfaction, commitment, and retention;
- Beginning teachers who participate in mentoring programs perform better at various aspects of teaching, such as keeping students on task, developing workable lesson plans, using effective student questioning practices, adjusting classroom activities to meet students' interests, maintaining a positive classroom atmosphere, and demonstrating successful classroom management;
- Most importantly, studies show that students of beginning teachers who participate in mentoring programs have higher scores, or gains, on academic achievement tests. (Ingersoll, 2011)

As the vendor for the RESA, Educopia is committed to the development of the best measures of effective teaching for Ohio. As such, Educopia regularly solicits stakeholder feedback on the RESA. Since it was first implemented in 2013-2014, the RESA has undergone numerous enhancements. Over the past year, we have engaged with a diverse group of stakeholders through surveys, focus groups, and meetings. Listening to the feedback of a wide range of Ohio educators, experts, and policy leaders, we have developed plans for further enhancements to the RESA, which would significantly reduce the burden on teachers, while maintaining the integrity of the assessment. We are simultaneously working on developing new resources to support both candidates and mentors.

As Ohio teachers go through the RESA process, they are required to analyze and reflect on their practice. Through reflection, teachers consider the content of what they are teaching, why they are teaching it, and how they can teach it better the next time. Teachers consistently emphasize how they have benefited from the reflection aspect of RESA. For example, Tori McCloud a Year 4 Resident Educator and first-grade teacher at Worthington City Schools commented,

Every successful teacher will tell you that reflection is one of the most important keys to their success. The ability to self-critique and make changes to an activity for the sake of student engagement, retention, and other factors is not always natural to educators, especially new educators. Through my own experience with the RE program and the RESA, not only have I learned to reflect but the reflection process has been ingrained into my everyday teaching, making me focus on being intentional with my lesson planning and instruction for the benefit of my students.

The RESA assessors are Ohio educators with at least five years of classroom experience. They undergo more than 30 hours of training for each type of task they score and must pass a rigorous certification test. To control for bias, assessors receive extensive bias training and are only assigned to candidates that they have never met personally or professionally, in order to eliminate any possibility of personal opinion entering into their rating. A different assessor scores each task that a candidate submits, and these assessors are selected based on their experience teaching the same or similar content, at the same grade level, and in a similar school context as that of the candidate. To ensure the scoring is accurate and fair, assessors are required to pass frequent calibration tests.

Ohio has spent a considerable amount of time and effort perfecting the RESA, and the state is beginning to reap the rewards of this work. To begin with, the objective data collected from the RESA allows the state, school districts, and teacher preparation programs to identify specific instructional strengths and weaknesses of most Ohio educators. This enables state and local programs to effectively target instructional resources and professional development on the specific skills where Ohio educators need additional support. For example, last year's statewide data shows that classroom management is an area of strength for Ohio's beginning teachers while differentiation of instruction, which is a difficult skill, is an area where they need more support.

In addition, the vast majority of this year's RESA candidates gave permission for their submissions to be used for professional development purposes, which allows us to develop video exemplars. With video exemplars, teachers, who often do not have the opportunity to observe other teachers' classes, will be able to see and learn from high-performing teachers across Ohio. In future years, score reports will have links to the video exemplars, which will be incredibly useful for teachers.

Unlike its predecessor, the Praxis III, the RESA is not funded through the General Revenue Fund. The RESA, which is administered at a significantly lower cost than the Praxis III, is funded through the Dedicated Purpose Fund for Teacher Certification and Licensure. As a licensure assessment, the RESA is directly related to the fund's purpose and well within its appropriate use, which is restricted to licensure-related functions.

Before eliminating Ohio's Resident Educator Program and the RESA, I urge you to seriously consider how this would affect beginning teachers. I believe the best way to understand the possible consequences is to listen to veteran educators with many years of experience working with beginning teachers, both prior to and during the tenure of the Resident Educator Program and the RESA:

Elimination of this program will undermine the efforts of educators to elevate the profession and may, inevitably, lead to a disintegration of support resources and programming to nurture entry year teachers.

- Lori R. Michalec, Tallmadge City, RE Lead Mentor, 2015 Ohio Teacher of the Year

I was the program coordinator during the Resident Educator Program "transition" years when it was a two year program with no summative assessment. The growth I observed in our teachers was not as deeply imbedded into their everyday practice as it became when the summative assessment was introduced as an integral part of the program.

- Connie Ball, Worthington City Schools, RE Program Coordinator

Many new teachers move and change school districts several times during the first years of their careers. The RE program is found in all districts in Ohio so a RE can move with confidence of continued support.

- Mary L. Inmon-Teglovic, Mohawk Local Schools, RE Program Coordinator

During my years of teaching, I have watched the 'ebb and flow' of support for new teachers. My experience with the Resident Educator Program has cemented my belief of the need for this mandatory Resident Educator program that gives new teachers assistance towards becoming a skillful professional.

- Joann Kelley, Solon City Schools, RE Mentor and Facilitator

Ohio's Resident Educator Program and the RESA provide the framework for beginning teachers to receive the support they need at a critical time in their careers. Most importantly, this program helps to ensure that every Ohio student has an effective teacher in their classroom. Ohio's teachers and students benefit from and deserve a highly effective teacher mentoring program, which provides invaluable data to the states, districts and university programs that prepare and support beginning teachers.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my testimony. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.