

Senate Finance Committee
Testimony – House Bill 49
June 6, 2017

Good afternoon, 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 Connie Ball, and I am the Resident Educator Program Coordinator for Worthington City Schools. I have been part of the ongoing process of supporting teachers in their first years of experience since 1998. In 2003, Praxis III became the official implementation instrument for entry year teacher support. I have trained at the state level for both the Praxis and Resident Educator programs; I have trained the trainers in both programs, and I was an assessor for the Praxis III Assessment in Ohio.

Because I have watched the amount of structured support for new educators change throughout the years, I feel compelled to speak to you on behalf of retaining the Ohio Resident Educator Program and particularly the Resident Educator Summative Assessment (RESA) as a requirement for professional licensure for teachers in the state of Ohio. The Praxis model was excellent as a starting point for both universities and school districts to have consistent and meaningful language for discussing professional practice and rubrics for assessing progress in the early years of teaching. While the Praxis structure included a summative assessment, it was based only on one year of teaching experience and a single observation, which many teachers felt was unfair. Therefore, Praxis did not provide an adequate avenue for long-range impact on professional practice of newly trained educators.

The Ohio Resident Educator Program, however, has proven to be a challenging and excellent vehicle for creating teachers who are truly reflective practitioners and skillful educators. New teachers have the opportunity to develop their practice within the first four years of their career following a process that provides strong mentoring and professional development in order to move them forward in their practice. This structure encourages the new teachers to carefully craft the questions that will ultimately strengthen their individual approach for each student.

In my role as program coordinator for Worthington Schools I oversaw the Resident Educator Program during the “transition” years when it was a two-year program with no summative assessment. The growth I observed in our teachers was not deeply imbedded into their everyday practice. This changed once the RESA was introduced as an integral part of the program. The preparation for the RESA requires structured time for guiding thoughtful reflection on classroom practice, continuous analysis of student data, consistent dialogue with mentors and peers resulting in deeply imbedded professional skills for each teacher. By year four, our teachers are holding themselves more accountable to their students and are able to talk in depth about why they make the instructional choices they make every day in the classroom for their students.

The Ohio Resident Educator Program provides the template for improving the professional practice of our new educators and the RESA component of the program solidifies the learning. The program has been greatly improved over the last few years, and I am confident that listening to teacher feedback and program coordinator feedback will continue to be a priority both at the state and district levels.

The RESA is a critical component for the licensure process and will certainly provide a sufficient avenue for long range positive impact on the professional practice of newly trained educators. This will go far in ensuring that every student in every classroom in the state of Ohio has a highly trained professional to guide their learning.

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