



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 Matt Verber, and I am the Executive Director of Policy and Advocacy for Educopia, the vendor for Ohio's Resident Educator Summative Assessment (RESA).

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.

For the attorneys on this committee, I suspect as law students, you would have been glad to see the elimination of the bar exam. When you graduated law school, you might have thought the bar exam was unnecessary: After all, you had already passed all the required legal courses, completed internships, and worked in legal clinics. However, if you are like me, you probably learned areas of law preparing for the bar exam that you had not mastered in law school. As experienced attorneys, you no doubt appreciate the role the bar exam plays in elevating the profession to ensure that lawyers have the necessary skills and knowledge to adequately represent their clients. Would you want a lawyer who could not pass the bar exam defending you in court? I don't think so. The same holds true for other important professions, including doctors, nurses, architects and civil engineers – these professions all require exams to ensure that practitioners are minimally qualified before they can serve the public. We should have no less a standard for teachers. It would be a travesty for the children in Ohio, to allow teachers to advance in their careers when they are unable to demonstrate the minimum skills necessary to educate Ohio's children.

The RESA is a tool to objectively measure a teacher's ability to demonstrate the Ohio Standards for the Teaching Profession, which the Ohio Educator Standards Board established. After three attempts, 98% of all Ohio teachers pass this test. But the 2% who do not, should not be educating children until they complete additional training. Eliminating the RESA in response to complaints from those who failed reminds me of my overweight brother who threw out his scale, complaining that it did not work properly. A few years and many pounds later, he still has not found a scale that he likes. The RESA is not the problem; it is the proverbial "scale" revealing those Ohio educators who are unable to demonstrate the minimum skills necessary to be effective with students. The solution is not to eliminate the RESA, but to use its data to improve instruction and the support that teachers receive through teacher preparation programs, mentorship, and professional development.

For the 2016-17 RESA, the first attempt pass rate is 70%, which is the highest ever. For the cohort of teachers who began the RESA last year, their first attempt pass rate is 68.2%, and their second attempt cumulative pass rate is 94.7%. The substantial increase in the pass rate between the first and second attempts is due to teachers reviewing the feedback on their score reports, meeting with their mentors, and working on the areas of their instruction where there is need for improvement. Isn't that what we want for beginning teachers in Ohio? Although some teachers may feel uncomfortable watching themselves on video, there is a reason why sports teams from high school to professional sports sacrifice important time on the field to view game films. If you truly want to improve, you need to take time to reflect and analyze your performance. This is the cornerstone of the RESA.

In completing the RESA, teachers consider the content of what they teach, the reason for selecting that specific content, 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 testified here last week,

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.

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. These data enable state and local programs to effectively target instructional resources and professional development towards the specific skills where Ohio educators need additional support. For example, last year's statewide data show 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.

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 these video exemplars, providing highly customized feedback to each test taker.

Significant enhancements to the RESA are already underway for next year. All are designed to make the test more streamlined, but no less fair. The improvements made to the RESA over the past few years have dramatically reduced calls, questions, and complaints to our help desk. Based on stakeholder feedback, my colleagues and I are confident that next year's enhancements will further accelerate this trend.

Unlike its predecessor, the Praxis III, the RESA is not funded through the General Revenue Fund. The RESA, which is administered at about half the cost of 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 purpose of the licensure fund, which according to Ohio Revised Code Section 3319.53, "shall be used by the state board of education solely to pay the cost of administering requirements related to the issuance and renewal of licenses, certificates, and permits."

Countries with high-performing education systems share one common practice: commitment to professionalizing the teaching profession. Eliminating the RE Program and the RESA will do just the opposite. At the same time that Ohio is raising the bar for teacher quality, it maintains a teacher retention rate that is above the national average. The state should not take a step backwards.

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:

- According to Lori R. Michalec, the 2015 Ohio Teacher of the Year and a lead mentor for Resident Educators, "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."

- Connie Ball, the Resident Educator Program Coordinator at Worthington City Schools, shared, "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."

- Mary L. Inmon-Teglovic, the Resident Educator Program Coordinator at Mohawk Local Schools, said, "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."

- Finally, Joann Kelley, a Resident Educator Mentor and Facilitator, commented, "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."

While teachers who excelled on the RESA and understand its value are not motivated to contact you, I am sure you have heard some complaints about the RESA from people who have struggled on the assessment. I know you also have heard frustration from the field regarding abrupt changes to education policy. Instead of eliminating the Resident Educator Program and the RESA, please follow the recommendation of the Ohio Federation of Teachers, PK-16 Council, the Ohio Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, the Cleveland Metropolitan School District, Resident Educator Program Coordinators, the 2015 Ohio Teacher of the Year and other teachers to maintain the Resident Educator Program and the RESA and allow the Educator Standards Board to review them.

If the Resident Educator Program and the RESA are eliminated, what happens next? How would districts support beginning teachers? What would be the requirements for Resident Educators to advance to a professional license?

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