

Chair Manning, Vice Chair Bird, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Alaina Tharp. I am a Family and Consumer Sciences Teacher and Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) Adviser and a member of the FCCLA Consultant. I am testifying in support of what is expected in the substitute bill, regarding Financial Literacy in Ohio, on behalf of the Ohio Association Teachers of Family and Consumer Sciences and Ohio FCCLA.

To begin, I would like you to take a moment and reflect:

- “How did you learn about Personal Finance?”
- “Do you ever wish you had access to a Personal Finance class when you were in school?”
- “What are some of the biggest financial decisions you’ve ever made? How did you prepare to make those decisions?”

Did you know...

- 12% of Americans can’t cover a \$400 emergency, and 27% would need to use a credit product or dip into savings to cover it. (Federal Reserve)
- Millennials started their careers with a combined \$1.5 trillion of student debt.....and counting. (LendEdu)
- The average U.S. consumer holds two credit cards and carries a balance of \$5,551 at 15-20% interest rates. (Experian)
- 1/3 of American adults have \$0 saved for retirement. (Money Magazine)

These stories and stats may be scary, but should they really surprise us?

1 in 5 students in the United States attend a school where a course in Personal Finance is required, only 17.9% of Ohio students attend a school with such requirements.

As many Ohioians find themselves living paycheck to paycheck, my goal is to end that trend by providing the necessary financial education in my classroom so that my students leave me with the skills and knowledge to budget, pay for higher education and achieve their dreams financially.

Within my classroom, I teach a semester-long personal finance course that allows students to obtain a CTAG which is a Career-Technical Assurance Guide, which allows students to earn 3 hours of college credit in public colleges in Ohio, with proper passing of the end of course exam, or WebXam.

While in my personal finance class, students gain real world skills such as:

- How to choose and prepare for colleges & careers...

- How to budget and manage spending...
- How to manage all features of a bank account...
- How to invest for retirement...
- How to navigate credit, including student loans, credit cards, mortgages, and more...
- How to avoid common financial mistakes

Our students need this knowledge. With the current law, students are only required to be exposed. This needs to be changed! Our students need time to learn and master financial literacy content.

This can be done when drafting a substitute bill and include the following, beginning with requiring a semester long personal finance class required for graduation and reduce the current graduation elective requirement from 5 elective units of instruction to 4.5 to avoid burdening local districts with an additional graduation requirement.

As a teacher, I see that students need more. They need more financial literacy education. We need all students to have the knowledge and skills to be successful and strengthen our communities and our financial being of our state. There are numerous occasions when I hear students say, "Everyone needs to take this class", in reference to Financial Literacy.

We have teachers that are able and ready to teach a required .5 credit, semester course. Educators with a business education license and or a family and consumer sciences education license would be exempt from the "licensure validation" required of Senate Bill 1 necessary to teach the .5 units of Financial Literacy required for high school graduation. Educators with an earned Ohio Adolescent Young Adult Integrated Social Studies License, issued on or after September 2013, would be exempt from the "licensure validation" required of Senate Bill 1 necessary to teach the .5 units of Financial Literacy required for high school graduation. A validation process would allow others to earn validation as they have never passed a licensure examination with financial literacy included on the assessment, and it is less likely they have received financial literacy training.

Ohio has standards set that can be implemented in the classroom for a .5 credit, semester course. The study of financial literacy required under division (C)(9) of this section shall be as expressed in the academic content standards for financial literacy adopted under division (A)(2) of section 3301.079 of the Revised Code. In other words, the Ohio Learning Standards in Financial Literacy. These standards were written for a half unit of personal finance to be delivered as a class by teachers of all content

backgrounds.

Family and Consumer Sciences students have the opportunity to implement these skills through various projects within the student-led organization, Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA). FCCLA offers individual and team projects. The program Financial Fitness explores areas such as earning, spending, saving, and protecting.

Our students desperately need personal finance skills as they enter the workforce. Exposure is not enough, it is evident. We are not reaching enough students in depth to make sure they graduate with the proper personal financial management skills. We need to put our students and their needs first. Our students need financial literacy. They need to know how to budget their money, pay for higher education, manage debt and remain financially stable to conduct themselves in their families and communities.

I ask you to consider my testimony as you deliberate on this important bill. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.