

6539 Palmera Drive
Mason, OH 45040

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Chairwoman Manning
Vice-Chair Bird
Ranking Minority Member Robinson
Members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee

I appreciate the opportunity to provide interested party testimony in support of the expectations in a proposed substitute bill regarding teaching financial literacy in high school. My name is Matthew White and I am the President of The Ohio Jump\$tart Coalition for Personal Financial Literacy. The Ohio Jump\$tart Coalition for Personal Financial Literacy is a nonprofit organization that brings together like-minded organizations to work collectively and collaboratively to advance financial literacy among kindergarten through college-aged students. As a state coalition, we are affiliated with Jump\$tart Coalition for Personal Financial Literacy, a national nonprofit organization based in Washington, DC with the same goal of raising the importance of financial literacy and the importance of effective financial education. In addition to my service with The Ohio Jump\$tart Coalition for Personal Financial Literacy, I am also a high school business educator at Mt. Healthy High School in Cincinnati, Ohio currently teaching career exploration and personal finance courses.

Over the past several years, our organization, in cooperation with our partners, have provided fully-funded teacher training events to help prepare qualified educators throughout Ohio in teaching this critical content to Ohio youth. Research continues to show the following about personal finance education:

- K-12 students can, and want to, learn economic and financial concepts when taught by teachers who know how to teach these critical concepts;
- Students who are taught in states where personal finance education is mandated exhibit meaningful improvements in credit outcomes;
- States where personal finance curriculum mandates exist have exhibited elevated rates at which individuals save and accumulate wealth during their adult lives; and
- Students who have taken a required personal finance class are more likely to engage in financially responsible behaviors, like saving, budgeting, and investing (Council for Economic Education, 2016)

Ohio's Attorney General even issued a report in June 2017 from its Student Loan Debt Advisory Group with the following recommendation: "All Ohio high school students should receive one semester of financial literacy education" (Ohio Attorney General's Student Loan Debt Advisory Group, 2017). However, as the report goes on to detail,

because financial literacy is not a tested subject and has no credit-bearing effect on high school graduation, many schools limit financial literacy education to a bare minimum in an effort to focus on core subjects, such as math, science, social studies, and language arts. Nonetheless, Ohio remains without a financial literacy graduation requirement in 2021.

As the research continues to suggest, stronger requirements for financial education lead to our youth making better, more informed financial decisions throughout their lives. Such research continues to suggest the following:

- Reduction of the likelihood of being financially underserved by the American financial system
- Lower delinquency rates
- Higher credit scores
- Higher net-worth-to-earnings ratios
- Stronger budgeting tendencies
- Improved savings habits
- Improved investing knowledge

To this end, we must endeavor to prepare qualified educators throughout Ohio as a means to prepare an environment in which meeting this need – a semester-long personal finance course required for graduation that effectively prepares Ohio’s youth – can become a reality. To effectively meet the needs of all constituents, this requirement must meet the following criteria:

- The current elective graduation requirement must be reduced from 5 elective units to 4.5 while ensuring the current Social Studies graduation requirements would stay the same.
- Embedment in another course is not an option as it does not satisfy the class requirement and research continues to show that a stand-alone semester-long course provides the best preparation for students.
- The foundation for this course shall be met using Ohio’s Learning Standards in Financial Literacy as these standards were written for a half unit of personal finance to be delivered as a class by teachers of all content backgrounds.
- Educators with a business education license, or a family and consumer sciences 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.
- All other teachers will need 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.

As an educator, I can speak with confidence that such a requirement can change the lives of Ohio youth. I have seen this in my own classroom through the elective career exploration and personal finance courses I teach currently. Students want (and need) this financial knowledge in order to become strong, financially-minded citizens of Ohio. We cannot operate with a “perfect world” mindset in this context – rather, we must operate with a real world mindset where we understand that our schools may be the only place where our youth can gain these financial skills for success. Furthermore, our local districts statewide must become the educational partners we need them to be in offering this critical content to our youth. Time is ticking and we must seize this opportunity to equip our youth now.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide this interested party testimony on behalf of The Ohio Jump\$tart Coalition for Personal Financial Literacy. As an organization, helping to meet this need will continue to be one of our driving forces. I am more than happy to answer any additional questions that you may have at this time.

With kind regards,

Matthew White

Champlain College. (2017). *2017 National report card on state efforts to improve financial literacy in high schools: Is your state making the grade?* <https://www.champlain.edu/Documents/Centers-of-Excellence/Center-for-Financial-Literacy/2017-Making-The-Grade/Making-the-Grade-2017.pdf>

Council for Economic Education. (2016). *Making the case for the need for economic and financial literacy education in the classroom.* https://www.councilforeconed.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/2016.11_Research-Summary-for-the-Website.pdf

Ohio Attorney General. (2017). *Ohio attorney general’s student loan debt advisory group report.* <https://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/Files/Publications-Files/Publications-for-Schools/Ohio-Attorney-General-s-Student-Loan-Debt-Collecti.aspx>