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Commission on Infant Mortality, Co-Chair
Commerce & Labor
Correctional Institution Inspection
Committee
Higher Education & Career Readiness

Vice Chair Bird and members of the Ohio House Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 497, which would no longer require that third graders be retained based on their third grade English Language Arts assessment score.

As a retired elementary school teacher, a mother of two, and a grandmother of three, I understand the importance of literacy. A strong foundation in literacy and reading is something that will carry students far throughout their lives, no matter their path. The high stakes nature of the third grade English Language Arts test can be intimidating to eight and nine year old students. The threat of retention causes anxiety for students who may not be the best test takers. A student, who is normally a good test taker, could be having trouble at home or with a friend, which can influence how he or she does on a high stakes assessment.

Everyone on this committee shares the same goal—we all want students to read, and we want them to have the literacy skills needed to make them successful in whatever profession they choose. Further, in this committee, we have had many discussions on local control, flexibility for school buildings and school districts, and parental involvement in a child's education. Instead of a one-size-fits-all approach to literacy that currently exists, House Bill 497 will give local control to districts when deciding to retain a child.

As we know, every student in Ohio learns in a different way, and removing the high stakes nature of the third grade ELA will allow teachers more time to provide interventions to students regarding literacy. Reading interventions are an integral part of Ohio's Third Grade Reading Guarantee law. This legislation changes nothing in regard to reading and literacy interventions. Instead of retention, incorporating literacy and reading earlier in a child's career would be beneficial.

In summary, House Bill 497 will remove the high stakes nature of the third grade ELA test while allowing parental input in retaining or promoting a child, like they already have now. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to testify, and we will be happy to answer questions at the conclusion of testimony.