

Mar 28, 2022

Chairwoman Manning, Vice Chairman Bird, Ranking Member Robinson, and fellow members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for your time today and for your consideration of House Bill 497. I am confident that this legislation will positively change Ohio's Third Grade Reading Guarantee Law by removing the consequence of grade level retention, as well as eliminating the fall administration of the Ohio State Test in English Language Arts for third grade students.

I am currently a fifth grade English Language Arts teacher. Before this, I spent twelve years as an Intervention Specialist, both in Westerville and Dublin City Schools. I have worked with the most vulnerable populations, and now I have the honor of working with students of all levels.

Earlier this week, I was discussing the Ohio State Test with my class. I always ask if they have any questions so we can overcome the anxiety that builds as we get closer to testing days. A student raised his hand and asked me "If we don't pass, will we not be able to go to middle school?" I confidently told him and his classmates of course not, this is one test on one day. You will get there. It was his response that shook me to the core. He said, "My brother didn't pass and had to stay in third grade for reading when he was younger. I just wanted to know if that can happen now." Other kids were popping up in agreement, each with a story about 3GG retention. The most interesting thing to me is that these fifth graders were in third grade 2019-2020. They had only taken the October test before we went to remote learning and tests were canceled. This group wasn't affected by 3GG due to the pandemic, yet here I was soothing fears that something similar could happen to them. It is clear that our learners have developed anxiety over these tests and possible retention; it clouds their educational experiences.

Please trust Ohio's Educators to do our jobs and support the reading success of our students. We have high expectations for learning for all students, and work hard to provide high quality instruction to support them in their learning. We will continue to meet each and every student where they are, and help them achieve everything they want to do in their academic career.

Thank you for your consideration of HB 497, and for considering these changes that will positively impact Ohio's students.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Michelle J. Cooper*

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