



**House Primary and Secondary Education Committee
House Bill 497 Testimony
Buckeye Association of School Administrators
Ohio Association of School Business Officials
Ohio School Boards Association
Ohio Association of Elementary School Administrators
March 29, 2022**

Good afternoon, Chair Manning, Vice Chair Bird, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today in support of House Bill (HB) 497. My name is Barbara Shaner, representing the Ohio Association of Elementary School Administrators. Joining me for this testimony and in answering your questions is Katie Johnson with the Ohio Association of School Business Officials, and Jennifer Hogue of the Ohio School Boards Association. Kevin Miller from the Buckeye Association of School Administrators could not be with us today, but he is in support of this testimony.

Our organizations represent public school district superintendents, treasurers/CFOs, business managers and other school business officials, boards of education, and elementary school principals from around the state. HB 497 proposes a positive change for many young students, and on behalf of our members, we wish to thank Representatives Manning and Robinson for introducing the bill.

HB 497 removes the legal mandate that third grade students be retained if they do not achieve the required score on the third grade English language arts assessment. We believe this is a positive step that is in the best interest of students.

The bill does not remove school districts' obligation to provide the necessary intervention and remediation services to students reading below grade level.

As the bill sponsors have pointed out, being held back in the third grade can have a tremendous negative effect on students, both emotionally and educationally. A much better scenario would be for students to be promoted to fourth grade if it is determined by their teachers and parents

that it is in their overall best interest. Meanwhile, schools would continue to intervene with these students to help them grow their reading skills without the harmful stigma of having “failed” third grade.

HB 497 also changes the requirement for the third grade English language arts assessment to only one required administration of the test each year. We appreciate this flexibility; however, we suggest that the bill be amended to allow districts the option of a fall and spring administration of the test. We have heard from some of our members that they prefer to give the fall assessment for purposes of local monitoring of student progress. Again, this would be permissive for districts, but would require that ODE make the assessment available twice during the school year.

We have appreciated the flexibility afforded districts by the legislature during the past three school years. It has allowed educators, school leaders, and parents to decide what was best for students on a case-by-case basis as to whether or not to promote students to the fourth grade. This flexibility would be continued through HB 497, giving those closest to the children the ability to make decisions based on what is best for them.

We urge the committee to approve HB 497 as a positive step for students across Ohio.

This concludes our testimony. We will be happy to address your questions.