



The OEA will lead the way for continuous improvement of public education while advocating for members and the learners they serve.

OHIO EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

February 7, 2018

Senate Education Committee

Senate Bill 216 – Opponent Testimony

Good afternoon Chair Lehner, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the Senate Education Committee. My name is Matthew Dotson, with the Ohio Education Association’s (OEA) Government Relations Division. Thank you for the opportunity to provide Senate Bill 216 testimony on behalf of 124,000 OEA members serving Ohio’s students as teachers and education support professionals in our public schools.

Senate Bill 216 is a wide-ranging bill with numerous policy proposals that impact educators and students. OEA has a variety of positions on specific provisions in the bill and we recognize the bill is still evolving. However, as an overall package the OEA opposes the bill as it currently stands.

Of primary concern are provisions OEA views as diluting or eliminating safeguards in teacher licensure that are designed to ensure the professionalism and preparedness of educators serving students in the classroom. On the other hand, OEA supports teacher evaluation reforms in the bill that are designed to advance continuous teacher improvement and student achievement. In some areas, the bill raises important issues that merit further exploration or consideration of more narrowly-tailored solutions.

The following highlights OEA positions and feedback on some of the major provisions in the bill:

OEA OPPOSES the following provisions:

Permits teaching a subject and or grade for which the person is not licensed: OEA opposes uncoupling teacher licenses from the subject matter and grades that are taught, which would “de-professionalize” the teaching profession and eliminate a key safeguard for students. Students benefit when their teachers are required to demonstrate proficiency in a subject matter and the professional training in appropriate teaching practices for the age group being taught. All students should have access to teachers who are specifically prepared in their topic/grade area to ensure students are ready for college and careers in a competitive global economy. As an alternative, OEA recommends further review of existing licensure “endorsements” to ensure they adequately meet all needs. “Endorsements” allow a teacher to add additional grades/subjects to an existing license, while still retaining standards that safeguard quality and protect students.



Requires educational assistants to have licenses only if working in federally funded programs:

OEA opposes lowering/eliminating minimum qualifications for educational assistants in non-federally funded programs. This would create inequities (some would have licensed educational assistants, others would not). Further, requirements to qualify for an educational assistant license should not pose a barrier to the efficient staffing of classrooms (an individual must either pass ParaPro assessment of basic skills OR have a two-year degree). That being said, it may be worthwhile to review the required qualifications for a license. But eliminating minimum standards would not serve the interests of students impacted by this provision. Minimum qualifications, ensured by licenses and permits, are designed to protect students.

Educator licenses for substitute teaching: OEA opposes the prohibition on limiting the number of school days that a substitute license holder may work. House Bill 49 (biennial state budget) recently provided some additional flexibility here, such as allowing a substitute to serve for up to 60 days from start date. Further review of durational limits on substitute service may be necessary, but unlimited service periods for substitutes is not in the interest of students and is subject to misuse.

Setting 30 as the minimum number of students ("N-size") in a group for student performance data to be reported: Ohio's plan with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) calls for a minimum of 15 students for N-size. OEA opposes an "N-size" of 30. OEA supports moving towards an "N-size" of 15 to reinforce the requirement that equity be provided in instructional services for all learners."

Requires the student and the student's secondary school to each pay for 50% of textbook costs: OEA opposes this cost shifting to students, which may reduce access to College Credit Plus opportunities for many families.

Non-teaching employee contracts: OEA opposes requiring newly hired nonteaching employees in noncivil service school districts (local, village and some city districts) to be employed for between six and seven years, rather than between two and three years, prior to receiving a continuing contract. Continuing contracts provide certain due process rights to employees.

Note regarding KRA: Although OEA opposes removing kindergarteners from the reading diagnostic requirement under the Third Grade Reading Guarantee, OEA supports more flexible assessment options regarding kindergarten readiness. The first substitute bill appears to have addressed these concerns.

OEA SUPPORTS the following provisions:

Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES) reform: OEA strongly supports teacher evaluation reforms based on the recommendations of the Educator Standards Board and approved by the State Board of Education. The proposed reforms reflect consensus among administrators and teachers about the need to create an evaluation framework that supports the continuous improvement of teachers. Evaluations will be designed to provide teachers with more specific, useful, and relevant

feedback that is linked to the instructional needs of students. In this way, the new evaluations will produce actionable feedback that is both teacher-driven and student-focused.

Paper format testing option: The bill permits public and chartered nonpublic schools to administer the third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade state achievement assessments in a paper format or a combination of online and paper formats. OEA supports maintaining the paper option for these assessments. Despite the increasing prevalence of electronic devices, not all students are equally prepared or comfortable taking on-line tests. And not all school districts are equally equipped with on-line capacity. This may negatively impact test scores for individual students.

OEA is an **INTERESTED PARTY** on the following provision and welcomes further discussion:

Requires the State Board to change the grade bands of teacher licenses: Reviewing the effectiveness of current licensure grade bands is worthwhile and may reveal the need to make adjustments. A more narrowly tailored approach might seek more grade band flexibility for special subjects that are particularly hard to staff in some areas of the state (e.g. foreign languages).

As a practical matter, it would likely take years to fully transition to a major shift in licensure bands. Individuals currently preparing to become fully-licensed teachers have already chosen courses and programs that are specifically designed for the pedagogical and subject-matter requirements of the current licensure bands. As a result, making current flexibility options more efficient and/or creating new flexibility options that build on existing licenses may provide more timely solutions.

Professional development requirements for gifted services providers - Quality professional development improves teacher practice in the classroom. However, current requirements for gifted service providers may be overly-broad and onerously applied, particularly for teachers with as few as one student in a classroom identified as “gifted.”

In conclusion, thank you again for this opportunity to provide OEA feedback regarding Senate Bill 216. OEA stands ready to work with the committee and all stakeholders to discuss more ways to make Ohio’s schools as efficient as possible, without sacrificing critical safeguards that support educators and serve the best interest of students.