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Chairwoman Lehner, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the Education Committee thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony today on House Bill 491.

This bill requires the State Board of Education to issue substitute licenses to certain licensed professionals which are (1) licensed in Ohio, (2) wish to be employed to work in a substitute capacity by a school district or school, and (3) submit to the State Board a copy of the current valid occupational license and all materials required to complete a criminal records check. House Bill 491 is legislation that will help cut down the unnecessary burden of dual licensing for certain licensed related service personnel and their ability to work in our schools as a short and long-term substitute.

Currently, the Ohio Department of Education requires by rules that these individuals must obtain a Pupil Services License to practice in a school setting, in addition to the individual's respective board license issued by the state. Unfortunately, in a district such as mine, there are shortages in many of the specified disciplines and it is becoming increasingly difficult to find short and long-term substitutes that need to have the additional professional licensure to provide the service to students. This legislation would apply for short and long-term substitute purposes only.

The proposed legislation would apply to the following licensed professionals:

1. School Speech-Language Pathologist
2. School Nurse
3. School Audiologist
4. Occupational Therapist
5. Physical Therapist
6. Occupational Therapy Assistant
7. Physical Therapy Assistant
8. School Social Worker

Many of the working professionals in the list above are highly interested in working as a short and long-term substitute in the school setting but decline due to the additional ODE licensure requirement.

Lastly, upon request of ODE, there is a provision in the bill draft for these licensed professionals to also be enrolled in the BCI Rapback system upon employment by the school district. This proposed legislation has been vetted by education stakeholders such as ODE, OASBO, OSBA, Ohio Federation of Teachers, Ohio School Psychologists Association, Ohio Occupational Therapy Association, and the Ohio Physical Therapy Association.

I would like to ask for this committees support in advancing this legislation so that we can cut through government red tape by reducing the licensure burden in our local school districts. Thank you for your time.

