



**Senate Finance Committee
Proponent Testimony
Melissa Cropper, President
Ohio Federation of Teachers
March 20, 2018**

Chair Oelslager, Ranking Member Skindell, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, my name is Melissa Cropper, and I am President of the Ohio Federation of Teachers (OFT). OFT represents teachers and paraprofessionals in rural and urban school districts across the state. I am pleased to testify in support of Senate Bill 246.

The Ohio Federation of Teachers supports SB 246 because we feel that suspension should be rare and reserved only for significant offenses. However, we understand that just prohibiting suspension is not enough. There must be programming that supports teachers and administrators in changing the culture of schools. SB 246 provides \$2 million dollars for grants to help schools develop programs that deal with the social emotional learning climate in schools.

By focusing on improving social emotional learning and training teachers and students how to deal with a traumatic situation in a positive way in the early grades the hope is we will lay the foundation of learning and behavior so there are fewer reasons to suspend students in later grades.

We support the phase-in implementation for schools so that all parties - students, teachers and administrators - have time for training and for coming to an understanding about how to implement the best program.

Finally, I want to thank Senator Lehner for pulling together stakeholders from education, K-12 and higher education, as well as human services and advocacy groups to talk about their concerns in the development of this bill. All those early meetings to discuss and come to agreements have made for short testimony at this stage in the process. I greatly appreciate that the expertise and voice of educators was included in this process.

Thank you for your time. This concludes my testimony and I welcome any questions.