

House Education Primary and Secondary Education Committee

HB 322 – Proponent Written Testimony

May 13, 2020

Britney Spears, Kindergarten Teacher in Reynoldsburg City School District

Chairman Jones, Ranking Member Robinson and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to provide proponent testimony in support of HB 322

I became a teacher to help my students learn. I specifically chose the younger children not only because they are adorable, but because I believe the first few years of school are the most important. The first few years set the tone and building blocks for the rest of their academic years. I know change is inevitable, but I take pride in knowing that I help get them started on the right path. My students always ask how many children I have and my reply is always 25. This is the amount of students I currently have plus my son. These children give me a purpose and I thank them for that every day.

When I began teaching several years ago, I was informed that I would be in the first group of teachers to complete the RESA program. At the time, no one knew what it would look like and we actually did not begin working on it until January because our mentors needed to be trained. When the program was finally rolled out in January, we spent many hours getting caught up on the time we lost. Over the next few years, I wasted time trying to get documents uploaded to the RESA server. I say that time was wasted, because it took several hours to upload and then would crash and you would have to start over. Yes, the system was new, but so was I. I was a brand new teacher trying to figure out how to teach and needed to be spending my time on my students, not submitting documents to RESA. In year 3, I failed a portion of the program and needed to retake it the next year. On my evaluations, my observation scores were skilled or accomplished so I couldn't figure out what I had done wrong. At that time, they did not give you feedback on why you failed. I could not imagine telling my students they failed a spelling test, but not tell them what words they got wrong, however, this is exactly what ODE did to me.

I have been asked to be a mentor several times and have turned it down every time. I cannot sign up to be a mentor knowing that the first two years are spent trying to prepare for the intimidating tasks of year three. This is not how the program should work. Mentors should be supporting the resident educators how they need supported. The most effective way the state can help teachers is by focusing on the needs of the new teacher, not making them jump through more hoops. Professional development and strong mentoring programs are the way to do this.

New educators are leaving the profession at an alarming rate. I myself have thought about leaving the profession, but not because of my students. Teachers are over worked and underappreciated. It is a very hard line of work. If we want to keep teachers in classroom, there needs to be change. I am asking you to please take action and help us do what we know best, teach.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for your consideration. I am available to respond to any questions you may have.