**Senate Finance Committee**

**May 29, 2019**

**Testimony on Am. Sub. House Bill 166, the FY 2020-2021 Biennial State Operating Budget**

**Ann Brennan, Executive Director, Ohio School Psychologists Association**

Chairmen Dolan, Vice Chair Burke, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on HB 166, the biennial state budget bill. I am Ann Brennan, the Executive Director of the Ohio School Psychologists Association and I would like to address two issues related specifically to the profession of school psychology. Our association represents approximately 900 school psychologists working in Ohio’s schools. Before I discuss these issues I would like to express OSPA’s general support for the Cupp/Patterson special education school funding proposal. We strongly support updating the special education cost study and funding the factors at 100% of the cost to districts. OSPA also appreciates and supports Governor DeWine’s proposed Supplemental Funding for Student Wellness and Success.

The first issue I would like to highlight and thank the Governor for including in the state education budget is the school psychology intern program special education enhancement funding. This program is vital to the Ohio school psychology profession as it supports the ODE approved school psychology training programs by funding the intern placements in school districts. We continue to experience shortages of school psychologists in many parts of the state. The university training programs address these shortages by working in their geographic regions to determine where the unmet needs are, and then working with school districts to assist in the establishment of intern placements.

 I would like to take a few moments to share with you what OSPA has done and continues to do, in partnership with others, to address the school psychologist shortage.

The school psychology shortage has worsened in recent years primarily due to the STRS changes that occurred which encouraged licensed educators, including school psychologists to retire earlier than previously expected. We have nine Ohio and National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) approved school psychology graduate training programs and they collectively place 100 – 105 interns in approved school district intern sites for their last supervised year of training. These interns are paid a salary stipend through the state funded school psychology intern program, which has been funded for over 60 plus years. It assures uniform, high quality training experiences. The majority of these interns take jobs in Ohio’s schools. This supply of school psychologists has until recently met the job placement demand for most school districts, except for some in the more remote rural pockets of the state, where recruitment and retention has been more challenging.

Over three years ago OSPA formed a School Psychologist Shortage Task Force which focused on identifying the problem as well as recommending a multi-layered set of recommendations. I will be happy to make that report available to you. In addition to that report, ODE also facilitated a Related Service Provider Workgroup to Address Related Service Provider Shortages, OSPA had 3 representatives on that workgroup. Our work ended in February and the report is in final draft form and is being reviewed by ODE for final publication. That report includes substantive recommendations, many of which are similar to the OSPA Task Force report recommendations. Part of the work of this workgroup was to produce a survey for related service providers, asking them certain recruitment and retention questions. The report will include that survey analysis and findings. We also produced helpful, brief, one page descriptions of the roles and responsibilities of each provider and videos of a representative of each profession explaining what services they provide to students, families and schools. Both of these products will be valuable educational and recruitment tools.

One very promising proposal that I would like to share with committee members is the concept of a “grow your own” recruitment and retention model program to place school psychologists in the hardest to staff schools. The idea would be to provide incentive funding for the current university training programs to use to partner with ESC’s or individual school districts to recruit professionals perhaps already working in the school district for placement in a part-time school psychology program. This training program would need to be part-time and delivered nearer to these shortage areas of the state. This type of partnership is already taking place in Mercer County through a collaboration with the University of Dayton, which has a part-time and full-time program.

The funding sources for this model could perhaps be leveraged from a dedicated state funding pool matched with local school district funds, with the school psychologist interns being placed in these hard to staff schools. The desired outcome would result in the same school district hiring these individuals, where retention would likely occur since these employees already reside in the area where the shortages exist. This source of funding would have to be in addition to the state intern program funding currently in the state budget, as that is needed for the 105 plus current interns in each co-hort group. Some of the current interns are being placed in under-served school districts through an intentional process, agreed to by the nine approved programs.  I would be happy to provide more information about this. In order to target funds, it would be necessary to collect up -to- date data indicating where the most acute, longer-term shortages exist and utilize this “grow your own” model to place school psychologists in those school districts.

To conclude I would additionally like to thank the nine university training programs who have expanded their acceptance numbers to the allowable maximum in order to help address the shortage. OSPA works collaboratively with them in our solution based efforts.

Thank you again for this opportunity to testify, I would be happy to answer any questions or provide additional information.

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