



Riverside Local School District

2096 County Road 24 South, DeGraff, Ohio 43318 Phone: 937-585-5981 Fax: 937-585-4599

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Chair Manning, Vice Chair Bird, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today regarding House Bill (HB) 583. I am Dr. Scott Mann, superintendent of Riverside Local Schools in Logan County. I am here today to testify in support of HB 583.

Riverside Local Schools experienced sub shortages before the pandemic. We would have to use intra-subs, in which teachers give up their planning period, on a regular basis to cover classrooms. When the pandemic hit, we lost about half of our most loyal subs. Most of our subs at this time were retired, thus, at their age, they made the decision to avoid subbing for fear of contracting Covid 19. During the pandemic, we had teachers give up their conference period, we had to consistently have our interventions specialists cover classes, on a few occasions we had to send multiple classes to the gym so a teacher could supervise the students. Moreover, we had administrators covering classes, playground duty, and lunch duty that was normally covered by teachers. We are negotiating with our union this year and the sub issue and flexibility has been a big topic.

The temporary substitute flexibility provided in the 20-21 and 21-22 school years helped our school district operate in a five-days-a-week in-person approach. This approach allowed stay-at-home parents to substitute and stay on the same schedule as their children. One hidden benefit the sub flexibility has produced is sparking the interest of non-traditional subs to enter the field of education. Two individuals that were subbing for us on a regular basis are now interested in going back to school to be teachers. I also feel we have a much bigger local involvement, that has led certain subs to join support organizations like athletic and music boosters, PTO, and our family and school partnership organization.

One issue not addressed in the legislation is substitutes at the preschool level. Riverside Local Schools is requesting your assistance in obtaining relief from the burdensome substitute teacher requirements for our locally funded and operated preschool.

Our District is located in a rural part of the state. One of the main objectives of the school is to provide an affordable preschool option that is conveniently located for local residents. Riverside Schools do not charge any tuition to families for their children to attend the preschool. The District also provides transportation to the preschool and school supplies free of charge to the preschool students. Many of the residents in our area make just enough *not* to qualify for state-subsidized preschool, and being in a rural part of the state, they live too far away from other affordable preschool options. In other words, without our preschool option, many of the residents of the district will likely go without affordable early childhood education. The preschool also helps identify children with disabilities early so interventions can be made as early as possible.

Current state regulations under Ohio Administrative Code create unnecessary hurdles to operating the preschool program as we cannot secure the appropriately licensed substitute staff to consistently remain open. OAC includes additional regulations for preschool subs such as:

- A medical statement signed by a licensed physician, physician's assistant, advanced practice registered nurse, or certified nurse practitioner that documents they are free of communicable disease and fit to work with children;

- Evidence on file that staff listed on an IEP providing services for children with disabilities are qualified personnel as required in rule 3301-51-11 of the Administrative Code;
- Orientation training as prescribed by the department, completed within thirty days of the individuals start date; and
- A signed non-guilty non-conviction statement on a prescribed form updated annually.

These remaining stringent requirements in O.A.C. 3301-37-04(J) make it very difficult to operate the preschool because not even a licensed Riverside administrator, such as myself, has the documents to meet the above-listed substitute requirements. In other words, while I have worked in the field of education since 2005, and hold a superintendent's license issued by the state, I would not be able to technically check all of the above boxes and fill in for one of the preschool staff members in a crisis. Thus, if the preschool administrator or aide have, for instance, a family emergency, the school must shut down as the law stands currently because otherwise the school will violate the staff to student ratio rules.

To compound the problem, those who otherwise might be willing to substitute in the preschool are more likely to go to a nearby K-12 school district because they do not have to meet the same requirements, (they only must meet the internal district requirements for this school year per S.B.1).

We ask that you consider working to create an exception within HB 583 by suspending the additional, unnecessary requirements for preschool subs to help ensure preschools like ours at Riverside will remain available for our youngest students. I have composed a letter for the committee members to provide additional insight into this situation and will provide copies to Chair Manning to distribute to committee members.

I would like to thank Representatives Bird and Jones for sponsoring the bill and express how important it is to have this bill become law before the 22-23 school year begins.

I urge you to approve HB 583. Thank you for your time and attention. I am happy to answer any questions committee members might have at this time.

Respectfully,

Dr. Scott Mann
Superintendent
Riverside Local Schools