

55th House District

Avon Lake, Elyria, North Ridgeville,
Elyria Township, Carlisle Township,
Grafton Village and Sheffield Village

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Committees

Primary & Secondary
Education, Chair
Higher Education and
Career Readiness
Commerce and Labor

Gayle L. Manning

State Representative

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 497, which would no longer require that third graders be retained based on their third grade English Language Arts assessment score.

HB 497 essentially does two things:

- 1). It does away with the state diagnostic test -- educators are not receiving results for at least a month and the results are not specific enough. With HB 497, schools can administer shorter evaluations with more specific information within the week so 3rd grade teachers can adjust to each individual child's needs.
- 2). It allows the parent/legal guardian to be a part of the discussion should their child be retained. Currently, this decision is being made by a state test score with no input from the parent/legal guardian.

As a retired elementary school teacher, a mother of two, and a grandmother of three, I understand the importance of literacy. A strong foundation in literacy and reading is something that will carry students far throughout their lives, no matter their path. The high stakes nature of the third grade English Language Arts test can be intimidating to eight and nine year old students. The threat of retention causes anxiety for students who may not be the best test takers. A student, who is normally a good test taker, could be having trouble at home or with a friend, which can influence how he or she does on a high stakes assessment.

Everyone on this committee shares the same goal—we all want students to read, and we want them to have the literacy skills needed to make them successful in whatever profession they choose. Further, in this committee, we have had many discussions on local control, flexibility for school buildings and school districts, and parental involvement in a child's education. Instead of a one-size-fits-all approach to literacy that currently exists, House Bill 497 will give local control to districts when deciding to retain a child.

As we know, every student in Ohio learns in a different way, and removing the high stakes nature of the third grade ELA will allow teachers more time to provide interventions to students regarding literacy. Reading interventions are an integral part of Ohio's Third Grade Reading Guarantee law. This legislation changes nothing in regard to reading and literacy interventions. Instead of retention, incorporating literacy and reading earlier in a child's career would be beneficial.

In summary, House Bill 497 will remove the high stakes nature of the third grade ELA test while allowing parental input in retaining or promoting a child, like they already have now. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to testify, and we will be happy to answer questions at the conclusion of testimony.

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