



Testimony Senate Bill 168
House Primary and Secondary Committee
Presented by Melissa Cropper, Ohio Federation of Teacher
Opponent Testimony
Apr 23, 2024

Chair Bird, Vice Chair Fowler Arthur, and Ranking Member Robinson. I am Melissa Cropper, President of the Ohio Federation of Teachers (OFT). OFT represents teachers in traditional and charter schools, support staff, higher education faculty and staff, social workers, library employees, and other public employees across Ohio. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony opposing SB 168.

SB 168 has several provisions that provide school districts with more flexibility on topics that make sense, such as: flexibility on dyslexia professional development, professional development credit for licensure on state-mandated training, district exemptions for highly rated school districts, and not having a separate school board meeting to approve the school calendar. There are, however, several provisions that we would like to specifically address.

Senior or lead professional educator licenses:

The bill modifies the minimum education requirement for a senior professional educator, lead professional educator, professional administrator, and alternative superintendent license to allow an individual who holds at least a bachelor's degree rather than at least a Master's degree, as under current law, to obtain such a license. We think that current standards should be maintained until standards can be developed that would set the criteria for the equivalency of a Master's degree.

Modified local teacher evaluation:

The bill adds an alternative framework for a school district board of education to use in teacher evaluation procedures. Current law requires a school district to develop and adopt standards-based teacher evaluation procedures according to a framework created by the State Board of Education. The bill permits a district to select a framework developed or adopted by the district rather than the State Board framework. OFT is open to local modifications to accommodate local needs with the stipulation that the evaluation process needs to be collectively bargained or, in the rare cases where there is not a union representing the staff, done in consultation with the staff.

Requiring courses to be taught outside the normal school day for no additional pay:

We are concerned about language in the bill that says school boards may not enter into supplementary contracts for high school credits taught at times outside the normal school day. Our members fear that this will lead to teachers being required to work longer hours without additional compensation. We urge that the current language stays the same. Teachers deserve to be compensated for additional work

done outside normal school hours and that compensation should be part of a collective bargaining contract. There is no reason to change the current law.

Employment of non-licensed individuals as classroom teachers:

OFT is opposed to the provision that gives districts flexibility to hire people who have a masters and have passed a content test. While we are concerned about a looming teacher shortage, the way to solve that issue is not by lessening the requirements for entering the profession. Instead, we should analyze why teachers are leaving the profession and why more people are not entering the profession. In the meantime, having a Master's degree and passing a content area test are certainly good first steps to becoming a teacher, but content knowledge is only part of the equation to being a good teacher. Knowing how to teach that content to students, how to differentiate, how to do ongoing formative assessments, how to engage students in learning, and so many other aspects of the science of teaching are equally, if not more important. Coursework in pedagogy is equally, if not more, important as coursework in content.

Prohibition on giving preference to seniority in non-teaching employee staffing reductions

OFT opposes the prohibition of using seniority as a factor in staffing reductions. When districts are in a financial crunch, they should not be able to reduce the staff by getting rid of the highest-paid employees. This is a disservice to the employees who have been dedicated staff members and are working towards retirement and a retirement benefit. Many of these positions are lower-paying positions that are already hard to fill; however, a pension plan is one of the perks of taking the job. Evaluation processes should be in place to remove individuals who are not good employees; therefore, when staffing reductions are made for financial reasons, the workers who have been dedicated employees should benefit from their seniority. This is a basic union right in a state that has shown over and over again that it values workers' rights.

Thank you for your consideration and I welcome any questions you may have.