

To the Honorable Members of the Senate Education Committee:

My name is Dr. Karl Kosko, a former classroom teacher and current professor of mathematics education at Kent State University, where I work with future and current elementary teachers. I am writing in support of SB 219 based on my own personal and professional experience, as well as data from a recent study of current prospective teachers in the state of Ohio. Over the past academic year, I have been apart of a cross-institutional group studying teachers' perspectives on the grade band licensure change nestled into HB 33 last summer. Data were collected from 646 future teachers across 26 different institutions of higher education in Ohio. After sharing the language of HB 33, we asked two simple questions: what their level of support was for this change and if it had been in place when they began college what they would choose to do. Across these 646 future teachers, 34.4% strongly opposed, 29.4% opposed, 12.5% neither supported nor opposed, 14.2% supported and 9.4% strongly supported. Opposition was strongest amongst the current primary and middle grades future teachers. When asked which licensure band they would have chosen if HB 33 had been in effect at the start of their college career, 41.8% indicated they would select the new PreK-8 content generalist grade band, 34.8% would select the new grades 6-12 content-specific grade band, and a staggering 23.4% would have chosen a path other than becoming a classroom teacher in the state of Ohio. I understand that the grade band change was sold to the Ohio legislature as a means of increasing teacher availability in certain grades (particularly the middle grades). I do not believe that recommendation was based on real-world data. However, the results of the survey that myself and others conducted is clear: unless SB 219 is passed and enacted, we will lose teachers when there is already a current shortage. There is indeed a problem that needs to be resolved in staffing particular grade levels and content specializations, but narrowing down the licensure grade bands from three licensure types to two will devastate Ohio's teacher pipeline. Passing SB 219 will help the state avoid this catastrophe.

In addition to the devastating effects enacting only two licensure grade bands will have on the number of teachers entering the profession in Ohio, there is also the matter of professional knowledge current Ohio teachers gain in our state's programs. For example, to pass the state licensing exam, current primary teachers must demonstrate two forms of knowledge for all four content areas: content knowledge through the middle grades and pedagogical knowledge for teaching content from preK through 5th grade. This is no small feat and requires a very full set of coursework across a 4-year degree. Middle grades majors face a similar task. For example, a middle grades mathematics major at Kent State completes 29 credit hours in addition to their mathematics pedagogy coursework in the college of education. Conflating these two majors loses content specialization in the middle grades where students are learning how to write and balance equations and begin learning early aspects of trigonometry, all while going through puberty. For the current primary grades, coursework on pedagogy will be spread thin since more coursework cannot be added. Moreover, the content of the state licensing exam, the OAE, will face one of two fates. Option #1: the new PreK-8 OAE will require teachers to have pedagogical knowledge for teaching children in ALL content areas from age 4 to age 14. Within mathematics, this includes the ability to assess and scaffold a child's understanding of subitizing, counting by 1s, counting onto and down from, understanding base-ten place value, understanding how to multiply and divide with whole numbers, multi-digit numbers, decimals, fractions, and integers. They must know how to teach a young child how to fair-share with discrete and continuous

quantities, how to partition different shapes and sets in early elementary, how to facilitate part-whole reasoning in 3rd and 4th grade, while also understanding why invert and multiply works at a conceptual level and to teach that to their students. I have not discussed algebra, trigonometry, or geometry, and I have not touched on any other content area besides mathematics. If history repeats itself, what will occur is that the content on the OAE will be dumbed down to allow for higher passage rates. We will have over 1/5 fewer teachers entering the workforce and they will be less skilled to teach our children. Essentially, we will be repeating a history that the 1983 report “A Nation At Risk” accurately criticized the education system as being “a mile wide and an inch deep.”

To summarize, I support SB 219 because it offers a chance to avoid a grave mistake for our educational system. Data from our study is clear: unless SB 219 is passed, we will do significant damage to the number of classroom teachers graduating in Ohio. Superintendents may have more flexibility with the recently enacted grade band changes, but they will have fewer choices with such flexibility.... Like a Golden Corral buffet after a High School Football team has visited it, but without the will to laugh about it. SB 219 will keep us on the right track with initial licensure of teachers. Thus, it is with these considerations I strongly encourage the members of this committee to support this legislation.