

Interested Party Testimony
SB 219 – Educator License Grade Bands
May 20, 2024

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Ingram, and other members of the Senate Education Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to give testimony and evidence in favor of SB 219. After giving my own proponent testimony and hearing the proponent testimony of others on May 7, I believe I can answer some of the questions that were raised in that session.

When a student speaker was asked what classes she had taken or would take that were specifically different for middle school teachers than for other grade band teachers, she came up with the example of Adolescent Psychology versus Child Psychology. At most universities there would also be numerous examples where content courses differ (e.g. Math for Primary Teachers vs. Math for Middle School Teachers) and where methods courses differ (e.g. field courses with discussions, assignments, and experiences specifically in the primary grades vs. field courses with discussions, assignments, and experiences specifically in the middle grades and specifically in the two content areas of a middle school preservice teacher's program).

The suggestion of a P-12 Education license with additional more specific certifications would remove even further the possibility of fully preparing a future teacher to enter the world of education than a P-8 license would. Higher education faculty seem to agree that it would not be possible to fully prepare a future teacher with both the content and the methodology they would need to be ready to teach all of the P-8 content at all of those grade levels. However, the thought behind the P-12 suggestion has merit. There could be an expansion of currently available endorsements. Once teachers graduate fully prepared for P-5 or 4-9 or 7-12 grade placements, they could be encouraged to add on additional endorsements to be fully prepared in additional grades and/or in additional content areas. Note that the creation of additional teaching endorsements could be accomplished much quicker and with much less expense than the replacement of P-5 and 4-9 with a P-8 grade band.

One thing to remember in any debate of grade bands is that currently for P-5 the candidates are prepared for all four contents, for 4-9 the candidates are prepared for two contents, and for 7-12 the candidates are prepared for one content area. This

gradual reduction in the number of contents makes sense so that teachers emerge fully prepared to teach those contents within the grades they desire. The replacement of P-5 (four contents) and 4-9 (two contents) with P-8 (all four contents) is essentially combining three separate university degrees.

Also, many teacher candidates have strong desires for a specific age range of students, and many do not want a P-8 or 6-12 license. In the May 7 testimony, there were students who specifically said they would have chosen something else or not taken a job opportunity outside of their license years. In a statewide IRB approved survey, approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ of the current teacher candidates in Ohio stated that they would have left Ohio or left education rather than to select between P-8 and 6-12. We can't afford to lose that many potential teachers.

We should be giving our future teachers more options, not fewer. A P-8 license in all four contents doesn't make sense, but perhaps it would make sense to have a P-8 license with a single content area concentration as well as reinstating the P-5 comprehensive (for teacher candidates who really want just the primary grades) and the 4-9 dual subject licenses (for teacher candidates who really want middle grades and two specific contents). A P-8 single concentration area license could prepare candidates to teach all P-5 contents but one content area in grades 6 – 8. This would give prospective teachers more choice, not less.

Please consider supporting SB 219 to reinstate the P-5 and 4-9 grade bands. There are other ways to deal with placement and shortage issues that would be quicker and more cost effective than a change to a grade band structure that will dissuade a large portion of potential teachers from entering the profession and result in less effective teachers and teaching.

Thank you,

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