

Written Testimony on SB 3 to Senate Education Committee
Submitted by: Ann Brennan, Executive Director
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Chairman Lehner, Ranking Member Sawyer and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide written testimony on Senate Bill 3 (SB3). I am Ann Brennan, and I am the Executive Director of the Ohio School Psychologists Association. Our association represents over 900 school psychologists, working in Ohio's schools. School psychologists are highly trained in the multi-layered area of educational assessments, including: selecting which diagnostic assessments are best to use to determine a student's academic level and progress, assisting school based evaluation teams in interpreting assessment results, and using the data gleaned from assessments to both design interventions and monitor the progress students are making during the intervention period.

School psychologists rely on research when both recommending assessments, as well as expressing concerns when they are used improperly. On behalf of OSPA I would like to address the following:

- 1% testing time limitation for taking practice or diagnostic assessments
- Exempting high performing districts from teacher licensing requirements and class size mandates
- Overarching concern regarding high-stakes testing policy

I listened to Superintendent Ward's (Dayton City) testimony last week and noted that she eloquently expressed several concerns that OSPA shares. We agree completely with the following statement she made "As a result, it is critical that testing limits be developed in a way that is meaningful and not arbitrary."

OSPA opposes the 1% testing limitation on diagnostic assessments or other curriculum based local measures of educational progress. Our fear is that this provision will be interpreted as a mandate, even though there is a local Board option to continue with such assessments if they exceed the limitation. These curriculum driven, short cycle formative assessments give educators the most useful information to determine where students are and how best to get them where they need to be. They also are designed to focus on particular strengths and weaknesses so that specific interventions can be designed to address them. Additionally they are the only type of assessments where progress towards the desired educational outcome can be tracked at regular intervals throughout the school year and then compared to the benchmark data collected at the beginning of the assessment cycle. This progress monitoring informs educators whether the interventions are working, and if not, directs them to design different ones.

We also have concerns regarding the exemptions for high performing school districts; specifically we do not support exempting school districts from educator licensing

standards. We do not believe that students will be well served by allowing any licensed teacher to teach any subject or grade level. Teachers should be licensed in their content areas or grade level areas. We understand the notion that individuals expert in certain fields may want to become teachers and would recommend that this could be considered through a specific waiver process, rather than this carte blanche approach.

OSPA also does not support exempting school districts from the class size requirements. School psychologists believe in reasonable class sizes for optimum student learning, regardless of the mixed bag of imperfect research on this issue, large class sizes seem absolutely counter intuitive. Research on improving mental health outcomes for students indicates where there is a more personal, mentoring relationship between students and teachers school climate and individual mental health is enhanced, the larger the class sizes the less likely this will occur.

Lastly, OSPA has a long-standing position that opposes the use of a single indicator based on a high stakes test that are then tied to grade promotion or graduation as well as using such test results to evaluate educators or school districts. I've attached for your information a NASP position paper on this subject; although it was adopted before Ohio's new learning standards were developed the basic premises and research are still relevant. We believe there is a disconnect between the requirements in NCLB, IDEIA and state testing requirements as well as an over reliance on high stakes testing in our state accountability system. Although NCLB does require uniform standards and certain grade band testing, it does not require that states elevate those tests into a high stakes accountability system that in turn harms students. OSPA would like to explore alternatives that strike a better balance between accountability for school districts while also using appropriate, multiple measures, for assessing student achievement. We are also appreciative of the need to address the conflict between NCLB, IDEIA, and state law and rules with regard to the issue of the extended years students with disabilities have to graduate high school- this issue needs to be addressed in our state report card system.

Thank you for considering our views on this extremely important issue. OSPA would be happy to provide a representative to the task force on assessments and testing that Senator Lehner is establishing. School psychologists have expertise in this subject matter and would appreciate the opportunity to contribute to the discussion.

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