

**Testimony Prepared for the Ohio House Education Committee**  
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Chairman Stebelton and members of the House Education Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to discuss with you issues related to quality teacher preparation.

My name is Kevin R. Kelly, and I am dean of the University of Dayton School of Education and Allied Professions. Our teacher education program has been preparing teachers for this state since 1920. We prepare students in the areas of early and middle childhood, intervention specialist and adolescence-to-young adult; we also offer numerous post-baccalaureate licensure and master's degree programs that make students eligible for Ohio teaching licenses.

I wish to preface my remarks by stating three assumptions regarding teacher preparation and K-12 learning in the state of Ohio.

First, every Ohio student deserves to be taught by a highly qualified and effective teacher.

Second, in order for Ohio's students to have high-quality teachers, Ohio's teacher preparation process needs to be strengthened.

Third, Ohio's teacher education programs must become more selective and professionally rigorous. We know that students with lower ACT and SAT scores enroll disproportionately in U. S. teacher education programs. Ohio teacher education institutions must become more selective, provide strong content preparation and engage teacher candidates in clinically rigorous experiences in order to place high-quality teachers in every classroom.

I want to highlight three key issues that I know you will want to consider regarding teaching in the state of Ohio: Teach for America teachers as a potential asset for Ohio education, current state of alternative licensing in Ohio, and steps needed to improve preparation of teachers for urban and rural schools.

**Teach for America**

How should we view TFA completers within the state of Ohio? The research, which I subsequently review, shows that TFA teachers become more effective over the course of their two-year commitment. Therefore, we should provide a

way for TFA completers with strong content preparation to enter the Ohio residency model, with two caveats:

- Completion of a two-year TFA experience is not equivalent to completion of the Ohio Resident Educator Program. There is no reason for TFA completers to be exempted from the four years of mentoring and support required by the state to receive the Professional Educator License.
- Research shows that TFA teachers do not produce satisfactory reading achievement gains for their students. We should consider ways to provide additional training, support and mentoring in literacy development for TFA completers seeking early childhood, middle childhood and intervention specialist licenses.

Let me offer the following facts regarding TFA:

- TFA was founded in 1989 with the intention of infusing teaching talent into low-income communities employing large numbers of uncertified teachers. TFA has been extremely successful in recruiting a highly talented temporary work force. For example, the 2003 TFA cohort had an average SAT score of 1310 and a GPA of 3.5 from prestigious academic institutions.
- TFA recruits receive five weeks of intensive training during the summer prior to being placed in a classroom as the teacher of record and, in most states, must take ongoing teacher education coursework at a local university. Many TFA teachers have the option of completing a master's degree by the end of their two-year commitment.
- There has been a good deal of empirical study of the impact of TFA teachers on student achievement. Although the overall findings are somewhat mixed and subject to different interpretations, three conclusions appear to be consistent across studies:
  - The data reflect the reality that TFA teachers encounter a steep learning curve over the course of their two-year commitment. Most research has found that students of first-year TFA teachers had

worse academic achievement results than the students of regularly certified teachers. First-year TFA teachers produced poorer reading outcomes for their students than first-year teachers from traditional teacher education programs.

- Even after their initial two-year teaching and educational experiences, TFA teachers produced relatively poor reading achievement outcomes.
  - The students of TFA teachers demonstrated superior math achievement in two studies. However, these positive math results were found for TFA teachers in their second and later years in the classroom.
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- The question of TFA teacher retention also has been studied. By most estimates, more than 80 percent of TFA teachers leave their school districts within three years.
  - We should be aware that TFA is not free. Approximately one-third of TFA operating expenses, including teacher recruitment and training, come from federal, state and local resources.
  - Ultimately, TFA does not appear to be a scalable solution to the challenge of staffing America's 3.5 million teacher work force. TFA teachers are estimated to represent .2 percent of U.S. teachers.

I believe that TFA represents an opportunity for Ohio if we can create appropriate licensing mechanisms for experienced TFA teachers to enter Ohio classrooms. Experienced TFA completers can contribute to Ohio's teaching talent pool. Many University of Dayton graduates have completed TFA; we celebrate their achievements and encourage them to return to Ohio as teachers. However, we cannot overlook that fact that TFA needs to significantly strengthen its training in reading. TFA matriculants enter classrooms underprepared to teach reading, which is unfair, if not unjust, for their students. Third grade reading proficiency is the no. 1 predictor of high school graduation and college attendance. We cannot

overlook the fact that TFA does not satisfactorily prepare its volunteers to teach reading and writing in their content area. In Ohio, every elementary and middle grade teacher and intervention specialist must be prepared to teach reading before entering a classroom.

### **Alternative License Options in Ohio**

There do not appear to be any significant barriers to teacher licensure for TFA completers with strong content preparation. Within Ohio's new four-tier license structure, there exists a broad provision for an Alternative Resident Educator License in the areas of middle childhood, adolescence to young adult, intervention specialist, and K-12 foreign language. To attain the license, candidates must meet the following requirements:

- Hold a bachelor's degree with a major in the subject area to be taught — or hold extensive work experience.
- Complete the Ohio Department of Education Intensive Pedagogical Training Institute (Includes three online modules and a 15-hour field teaching component).
- Pass the appropriate content area exam.

We find this alternative license provision to be unsatisfactory because it does not include the 12 semester hours of reading coursework for middle childhood and intervention specialist licenses that are required of all graduates of traditional teacher education programs in Ohio. That being said, I do not see any unreasonable barriers for any individuals with strong academic skills and content knowledge to attain an Alternative Resident Educator License.

### **Improving Teacher Preparation**

There is consensus that teacher effectiveness will be enhanced by two strategies within teacher education programs: Enhancing content knowledge and providing deep clinical experience for pre-service teachers.

In 2010, the National Research Council convened a Committee on the Study of Teacher Preparation Programs in the United States to develop objective, research-based recommendations for federal and state legislators. Their report,

*Preparing Teachers: Building Evidence for Sound Policy*, highlights the importance of depth of knowledge of content and of how to teach within specific content areas (e.g., math, science). Content knowledge is the foundation of effective teaching.

There is also consensus regarding the importance of extensive clinical experience for pre-service teachers. To reflect the importance of clinical experience, the University of Dayton teacher education program requires 80 to 120 classroom hours for students in the fall semester of their senior year and a 12- to 15-week student teaching assignment. Student teachers are placed in sites where University faculty provide professional development to supervising teachers who, in turn, supervise student teachers.

We also take seriously the need for specialized preparation of teachers for urban schools. Through our Urban Teacher Academy, we provide a yearlong seminar on urban education with a field placement during the junior year, student teaching in an urban school with a mentor teacher in the senior year, and a post-graduate year of mentoring and University support for graduates hired as teachers within Dayton Public Schools. We believe this specialized training prepares high-quality teachers specifically for the urban context. Other universities are developing similar programs.

Because we recognize the importance of developing teachers with strong content knowledge and specialized preparation for challenging schools, we applaud the state's partnership with the Woodrow Wilson Foundation to prepare STEM teachers for high-need urban and rural schools. In this program, the foundation recruits teaching fellows, individuals with a bachelor's degree in a STEM field, to enroll in a master's degree program at a partner university. During the first semester of the master's program, the STEM fellows spend at least three full days in school classrooms; during the second semester, they spend four to five days in classrooms. The fellow becomes a teacher of record after 15 months of clinically based master's coursework. We believe that the Woodrow Wilson Fellowship program provides Ohio's most talented college graduates with an in-state opportunity to enter the teaching profession, which will enhance their chances of their long-term retention within Ohio K-12 education.

Mr. chairman, I appreciate the opportunity to share my thoughts regarding these important topics with you and the committee. I look forward to responding to your thoughts and questions regarding my testimony.