

## Testimony on the OCALI Advisory Board

Sunset Review Committee

Senator Kris Jordan, Chair

April 12, 2016

Chairman Jordan and members of the Sunset Review Committee, I am Jessica Voltolini, director of the Office of Policy and Legislative Affairs at the Ohio Department of Education. Thank you for the opportunity to present you with information regarding the OCALI Advisory Board.

OCALI is the Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence. As required by law, OCALI was established by the ESC of Central Ohio and the superintendent of public instruction to administer programs and coordinate services for infants, children, and adults with autism and low-incidence disabilities. OCALI is under contract with the department of education to perform several statutory duties, including collaborating with stakeholders that serve or educate individuals with autism; providing professional development, intervention services, and technical assistance; and disseminating information about autism and low incidence to parents, professionals, and the public.

The state superintendent created the OCALI Advisory Board to assist the ESC of Central Ohio in OCALI's operation and to provide technical assistance in serving autistic individuals. The board currently has 18 members who are stakeholders in the service of persons with autism, including autistic individuals, family members affected by autism and educators at all levels. The board also has two ex officio members representing both the Ohio Department of Education and the Department of Job and Family Services. Board bylaws ensure geographic representation from all regions of the state.

The only role of the department of education in the OCALI Advisory Board is appointing the board's members. The department does not devote funding or staff time to the board.

Nevertheless, we recognize the importance of the Advisory Board in guiding and assisting OCALI in its work. Because board members have personal or professional experience with autism disorders, they provide crucial input into the ways that autistic individuals can best be served. In recent years, the board has helped write recommendations on supporting Ohioans with autism and has provided expertise in the development of a series of Web courses for autism certification. The board also engages with the Interagency Work Group on Autism to ensure that policy and practice in member agencies reflect the needs of those affected by autism.

We respectfully recommend that the OCALI Advisory Board be continued.

Thank you for your consideration. I'd be happy to address any questions that the committee may have.