

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair Slaby, Ranking Member Fedor and members of the House Education and Career Readiness Committee: I am pleased today to offer testimony regarding Ohio House Bill 176.

The 2017-18 school year will mark my 24th year spent as an educator. I began my career teaching secondary English. During this time I earned my master's degree from the University of Dayton in Educational Leadership and made the decision to enter administration. I have served as a middle school principal, assistant superintendent, and beginning next year, I will be serving as a school superintendent for my 10th year.

I have worked in almost all school settings including education in rural, suburban, and urban districts. Currently, I lead Hamilton City Schools. Hamilton is the 18th largest district in the state of Ohio, with a student population hovering around 10,000 students. Our demographics reveal that approximately 73% of those students are at poverty level. 12.5 % of our students are black, 13.5 % are Hispanic, and 17% are special needs students. Currently, 300 of our students are homeless.

And yet given the diverse population we serve, this year 216 of our 477 graduates earned a scholarship to college. 22 of our students entered the military. Our comprehensive high school, with its own Career Technical Education, has a post high school job placement rate of approximately 96%. Our graduates in Hamilton have earned full scholarships to prestigious universities such as Yale and West Point Academy to just name a few.

I am here today to offer support for several aspects of HB 176. I applaud State Representative Thompson for sponsoring this bill simply on the merit that he has recognized that our current approach to education in Ohio is flawed. I have always believed that it is better to choose to do something about an issue instead of simply admiring a problem and complaining about it.

Since the inception of state testing in 1994, I have been witness to major changes that have definitely resulted in the law of unintended consequences. Leadership instability is prevalent at the State Superintendent level. For example, we changed from Deborah Delisle 2011, to Stan Heffner 2011, to Michael Sawyers 2012, to Richard Ross 2013, to Lonny Rivera 2015, and since 2016 we have Paolo DeMaria. As

with any changes in leadership, a system is affected both positively and negatively.

Since 1994, we have been witness to sweeping overhauls to our educational system. These overhauls to state testing have occurred in 2004 with the phase out of the Ohio Proficiency Test as we transitioned to the Ohio Achievement Test (OAT) and the Ohio Graduation Test (OGT). Only five years later in 2009, we learned of the Common Core, which was adopted in 2010. However, during the transition, we were held to the same standards for the OAT and OGT. During the 2014-15 school year, we endured the PARCC assessment, a \$120 million dollar fiasco, apparently orchestrated by former State Superintendent Hefner. The PARCC assessment was replaced one year later with a new test, AIR.

What have we learned about state testing and its affects on SAT, ACT or PISA (program for international student assessment) scores? (see handout pages) No statistically significant change has occurred on the SAT, ACT, or PISA. Moreover, what we have learned is that the state testing simply reaffirms that students who come from higher socioeconomic status perform better than those who do not. We've learned that the cut scores on testing are both arbitrary and capricious. To illustrate, when the geometry AIR assessment results were released in the Fall of 2017 based upon the previous year's assessment, the statewide results demonstrated that initially approximately 24% of Ohio's students were proficient. The Ohio Department of Education and State Board of Education adjusted the cut score, resulting in 49% of students statewide showing proficiency. By simply changing the cut score, 25% more students were suddenly proficient! So what do the scores even mean? These scores have severe implications on student performance including graduation rate, teacher evaluations, principal evaluations, and a district report card. The district report card has become a political football that can have dire consequences on a local community because of economic development and real estate value. It has the power to attract or repel new business in Ohio.

As a result of the snapshot of concerns I have shared, I support aspects of HB 176. The areas of it I support include the reduction of testing, although testing should be eliminated. I support HB 176's elimination of OTES and OPES, the elimination of the punitive condition established under the Third Grade Reading Guarantee, and overall the most important aspect is the

return of local control to local Boards of Education and the communities they represent.

Although I support many parts of HB 176, I do have some concerns. I do not support moving away from the stability of the Common Core. We can no longer have a moving target. Each time legislature, the State Board of Education, or the Ohio Department of Education changes the curriculum or creates unfunded mandates, taxpayers, students, teachers, and districts bear the burden. Taxpayers would bear the cost of new textbooks, making already wealthy textbook companies even richer. If we assume that state testing is here to stay and we allow districts to select its own curriculum, we would create an environment where the wild, wild west is reborn. Students would lack consistency in their knowledge base. Hamilton City Schools has a 30% transient rate. If 30% of our students enter and withdraw during the year, and the “new enrollees” enter with gaps in their knowledge because of a different curriculum, the students will be at a disadvantage. We all need to remember that what we do in education is supposed to be about students and the futures of those students.

I have always believed that what has made our country and state strong is the creativity we have as a society. We once taught creativity and encouraged grit and determination. I am hoping that we can again return to the philosophy and approach that has made Ohio great. Overall I support the philosophy of needed change contained within the language of HB 176. Thank you.