



**House Education and Career Readiness Committee  
House Bill 591 Testimony  
Ohio School Boards Association  
Buckeye Association of School Administrators  
Ohio Association of School Business Officials  
May 15, 2018**

Good afternoon, Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair Slaby, and members of the House Education and Career Readiness Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today regarding House Bill (HB) 591. My name is Jennifer Hogue, director of legislative services for the Ohio School Boards Association. Joining me today for this testimony and in answering your questions are Barbara Shaner with the Ohio Association of School Business Officials and Thomas Ash from the Buckeye Association of School Administrators.

Our organizations represent public school district boards of education, superintendents, treasurers/CFOs, business managers, and other school business officials from around the state. Our members, of course, have a keen interest in the provisions proposed in HB 591. We are here today to offer our support for the bill.

We would like to thank Representative Duffey for his leadership on this issue and for including us and other stakeholders in conversations around the provisions in this bill. This bill is designed to create a report card system that is understandable, provides value, and can be trusted by school districts, parent and legislators.

Our members have been asking for changes to the current report card system. They believe that reports of school district quality should provide accurate reflections of district, staff, and student achievement. Publication of district and school report cards must be accurate, fair, and credible. Reports should be communicated to the public in a clear and concise manner. We believe HB 591 accomplishes these objectives.

#### **Letter Grades**

We support HB 591's elimination of the use of letter grades for school district report cards. In concept, one would think grades A to F make it easier for parents and other stakeholders to gain an understanding of how a school or district is performing. However, our members believe the current letter grades do not truly depict the achievement of schools and districts. The use of letter grades for individual students in a given subject area cannot simply be applied to districts and schools. We support the transition to the use of raw scores that clearly show how a district or school is performing.

#### **Composite Grade**

We also agree with the bill's elimination of a composite grade on school and district report cards. First, there is no agreement on how much weight each component of the report card should carry. Second, as previously mentioned, our members prefer the focus to be on how the district is performing in each area of the report card rather than boiling the scores down to one anything but simple letter grade.

## **Graduation Rate**

The graduation rate measure is greatly improved under HB 591. Districts have long requested that students with special needs be reflected accurately within the measure. Federal law allows students with an IEP to remain at the district to receive services related to their IEPs until the age of 23. While these students benefit by continuing to receive the services, districts are penalized because the current report card reflects these students the same way as a student who has dropped out of school.

HB 591 corrects this problem by allowing districts to show the percentage of students remaining for additional services as a subset of the graduation rate measure. We believe that by reporting the percentage of students who are on-time graduates, the percentage of students who are remaining to receive IEP services, and the percentage of students who have dropped out of school, communities receive a clear picture of the work occurring in the district.

## **Student Growth**

Our members believe that measuring student growth is extremely important. However, under our current report card system, value-added is used to measure growth in a way that is not easily understandable and cannot be replicated because it uses a proprietary formula. Under HB 591, the student growth measure must allow for results to be validated and replicated by schools and districts. This will ensure that everyone understands how student growth is measured and will in turn provide credibility to the measure in helping to inform instructional strategies to meet the needs of students.

## **Third Grade Reading**

Our members support focusing on literacy for our youngest students but believe that the current measure, K-3 literacy, lacks clarity and is not a fair representation of the progress students are making in the earliest grades. The current K-3 literacy measure only reflects students who are struggling in reading. The current measure does not reflect the successes of students who are on track for reading proficiency. This is why we support the new Third-Grade Reading measure in HB 591. This new measure is based on student performance and will show the percentage of students promoted under the third-grade reading guarantee.

## **Tools for Comparisons**

We appreciate the sponsor's intent to provide tools for comparisons among districts with this report card reform bill. Districts will have the ability to compare themselves to other similar districts in order to look for areas that need improvement. The bill minimizes the use of district rankings, but allows districts, communities, and legislators to see in what percentile each district is performing in all areas of the report card.

## **Suggestions for Improvements to HB 591**

In sponsor testimony, Representative Duffey indicated to the committee that HB 591 does not yet address the area of sanctions for low performing districts. Instead, the old report card would still be utilized for decisions about state takeovers of local school districts. However, he indicated a willingness to work with the committee to address this issue.

We believe the current report card is flawed (as indicated through this testimony). Therefore, we feel strongly that Ohio should not continue to use the current measures when determining whether a school district falls under sanctions such as the control of a state sanctioned academic distress commission. We urge the committee to allow for the transition to the new report card as outlined in HB 591.

In the meantime, we ask that you restore a prior law provision that prohibited the report card ratings from the 14-15, 15-16, and 16-17 school years from being used to determine eligibility for an academic distress commission. In 2015, the legislature enacted a three-year safe harbor from the effects of the state test results for students, public schools, and school districts. This temporary policy was broadly supported, and its rationale was simple and clear: the rapid and sometimes bumpy transition to the new

standards, PARCC tests and AIR tests, as well as compliance with other additional testing factors, placed an incredible burden on our students, our teachers, and our schools.

Therefore, the legislature stated that no repercussions would be permitted during a three-year transition period (the 14-15, 15-16 and 16-17 school years). That meant that no students could be denied course credit for a poor mark on a state test; no school district could become subject to an academic distress commission or become eligible for vouchers; no charter school could be closed due to poor performance. The policy was broadly applied to all those involved in education: students, teachers, administrators, traditional schools, and even charter schools.

Yet, on nearly the same day this transition provision was approved, the legislature made a small change that greatly affected its impact. The law was revised to exclude academic distress commission eligibility from the transition protections. Restoring this transition, would mean that the clock for new academic distress commissions would begin this year with the 17-18 report card to be released this fall.

Further, we recommend that the committee look for proven alternatives to state takeover to assist struggling districts with improving student achievement. We are aware that other states have utilized specific academic intervention programs as a proven way to help avoid a state takeover and provide results for students in districts showing the most need for improvement.

We recognize these are complicated issues. We stand ready to work with the sponsor and the committee to address the challenges that come with changes like those proposed in HB 591. Again, we urge your support of the bill.

This concludes our testimony. We'll be happy to address your questions.