Chairman Jones and members of the HB 9 Conference Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today regarding Ohio's EdChoice Voucher program. My name is Jim Cook and I am an 18 year Board of Education member at St. Clairsville-Richland City Schools in eastern Ohio. I want to take this opportunity to talk to you about the report card, the mechanism that has placed over 1200 buildings on a "failing school" list. I want to give you details on how this report card is driving this "failing school" list.

First let's look at the Value-Added tests which are given to elementary, middle and high school students. The purpose of these tests is to measure a student's academic growth over a period of time, generally a year. SAS, the North Carolina company that developed the EVAAS methodology used to calculate our growth scores, insists that growth is independent of socio-economic factors. However when you examine Ohio's test data you find that this is not the case. Only a handful of districts with low household incomes will exceed their expected growth while almost all districts with high household incomes will exceed their expected growth. Even more troubling is the way growth is determined. For tests that are given in consecutive years (grades 3-8 math and reading) SAS uses their MRM method to determine growth. SAS states that the growth expectation is met when a group of students from a school maintains the same relative position with respect to the state distribution from one grade to the next. But when some buildings increase in position, other buildings have to decrease in position. Every building can't win. It is the magnitude of change in position that determines the letter grade. For tests that are non-consecutive (grade 5 science, grade 8 science) SAS uses their URM method. SAS states that the growth expectation is met when a school made the same amount of progress as the statewide average school. With both methods SAS makes this "key feature" claim: "The value-added measures tend to be centered on the growth expectation with approximately half of the district/school/teacher estimates above zero and approximately half of the district/school/teacher estimates below zero" with zero being defined as expected growth. And Ohio's test results confirm this with 50%, 54%, 53%, 53%, and 52% greater than zero over the last 5 years. Translating this to letter grades means an average of 34% of the buildings has received a grade of F each year. That in turn means almost 1000 buildings are receiving an F each year and if a building does this for two out of three years it is on the EdChoice list. This is one of the components that caused a significant increase in the number of buildings that were deemed "failing" and this is not going to change regardless of any real absolute growth. The grading methodology is simply going to give about 1/3 of the buildings an F.

And second I would like to look at K3 Literacy or Improving At-Risk K3 Readers as it is known today. The intent of this component is to look at how successful a school is at improving struggling readers. The measurement is only of those students identified as being "not on track" so it can be of a small portion of the total population that can cause a building to be placed on the "failing" list. The measurement is the number of students you move to "on track" divided by the number that started "not on track". Consider a building where 85 students start "on track" and 15 start "not on track". Over the course of a year 5 students are

moved to “on track”. The measure is 5/15 or 33%, a letter grade of D. Although 90% of the students are now “on track” the building gets a D for the year. Failing? If a building receives a D or F in two out of three years it is deemed “failing”.

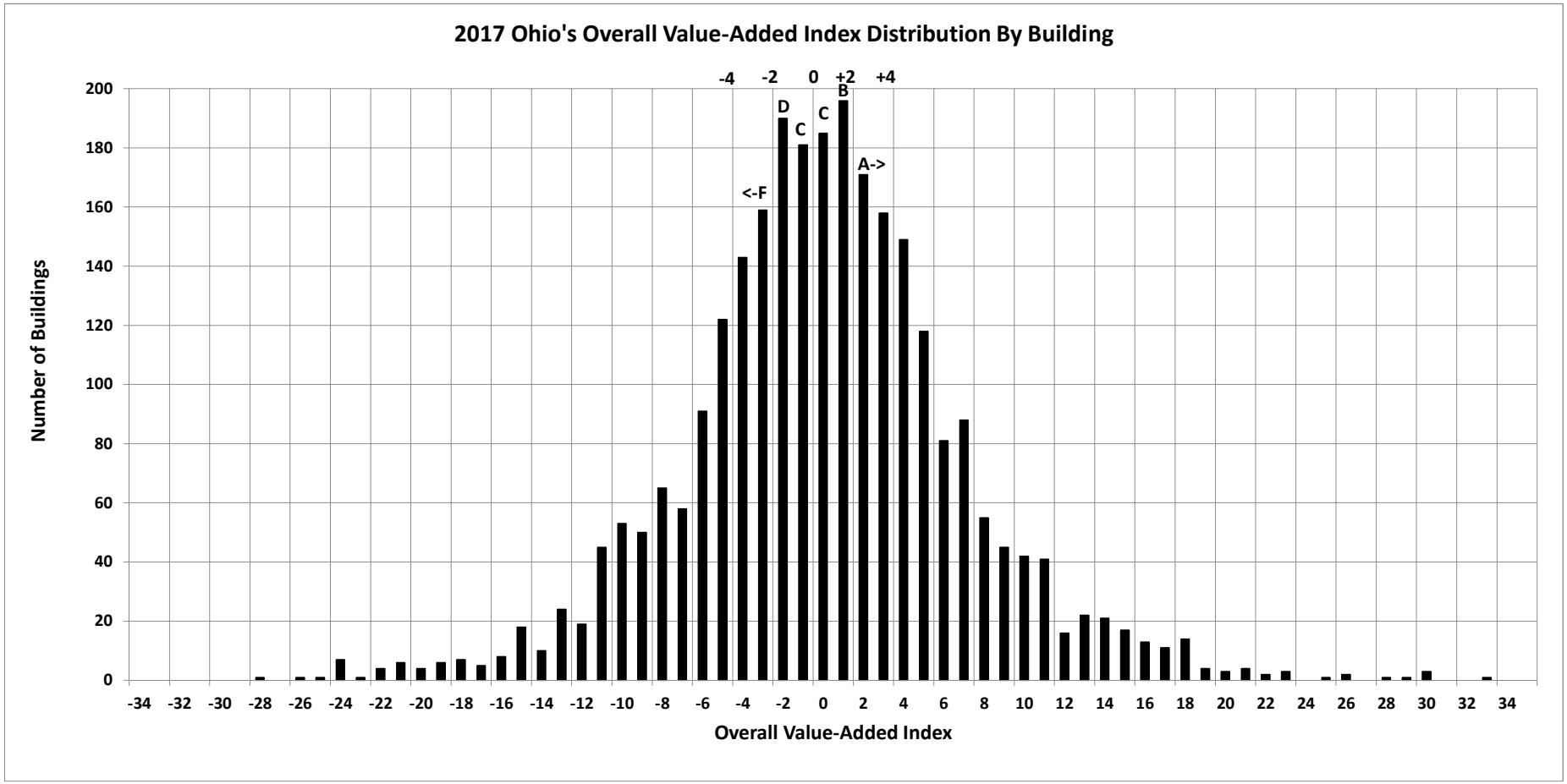
Furthermore per state law for a third grade student to be considered “on track” the student must pass both the reading AND writing portion of the third grade ELA assessment. So after four years of reading diagnostic tests and reading improvement plans, writing is thrown in on the last test. In addition state law requires a one student deduction in the numerator of the calculation for a student that fails to score proficient on the third grade ELA assessment and was not on an improvement plan (RIMP). What does all this mean? In our case we had third grade students pass the fall diagnostic test and pass the reading portion of the spring ELA assessment. In other words, THEY COULD READ. But they didn’t pass the writing portion of the ELA assessment and since they weren’t on an improvement plan we got deductions to the numerator in the calculation. It was these deductions that caused our grade to go from a C to a D and put us on the EdChoice list. It makes absolutely no sense to me how you can get penalized on a reading program for students that can read.

But I think most egregious is the fact that state law mandates that the state average of this measure be designated the “low C”. That means that each year approximately half of the elementary schools are placed in the “DF” bucket. Today almost 550 elementary buildings have had a D or F in two out of the last three years with nearly 300 of them being placed on the EdChoice list for this component only. And these numbers are only going to fluctuate slightly since nearly half of the buildings are put in the DF bucket each year.

I created a simulation model that came within one percent of ODE’s list of 1227 buildings. I ran that model with only 2018/2019 value-added grades and 2014/2018/2019 K3 literacy grades (no building grades, no lowest 10%, no graduation rate). That model produced a list of over 1100 buildings qualifying as EdChoice. That’s 90% of today’s list due to these two components alone. And that number will be relatively fixed from year to year (there are variations in which buildings catch two out of three years). It’s the mathematics of the methods. It is independent of any real absolute improvement. It’s a system designed to produce large numbers of failing public schools.

And now the Senate wants to use building grades to reduce the list of over 1200 buildings to a more palatable number. The building grade comes from this flawed report card. What makes anyone think the building grade is credible and the other grades are flawed when it’s the other grades that create the building grade? It’s like trying to build a nice house with poor materials. Generally speaking, junk in equals junk out.

Members of the Senate I strongly urge you to walk away from this performance based system and vote in favor of the House version of SB 89. Chairman Jones and members of this committee, I thank you for your time. I am happy to address your questions.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Number of Buildings
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-4
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0
+2
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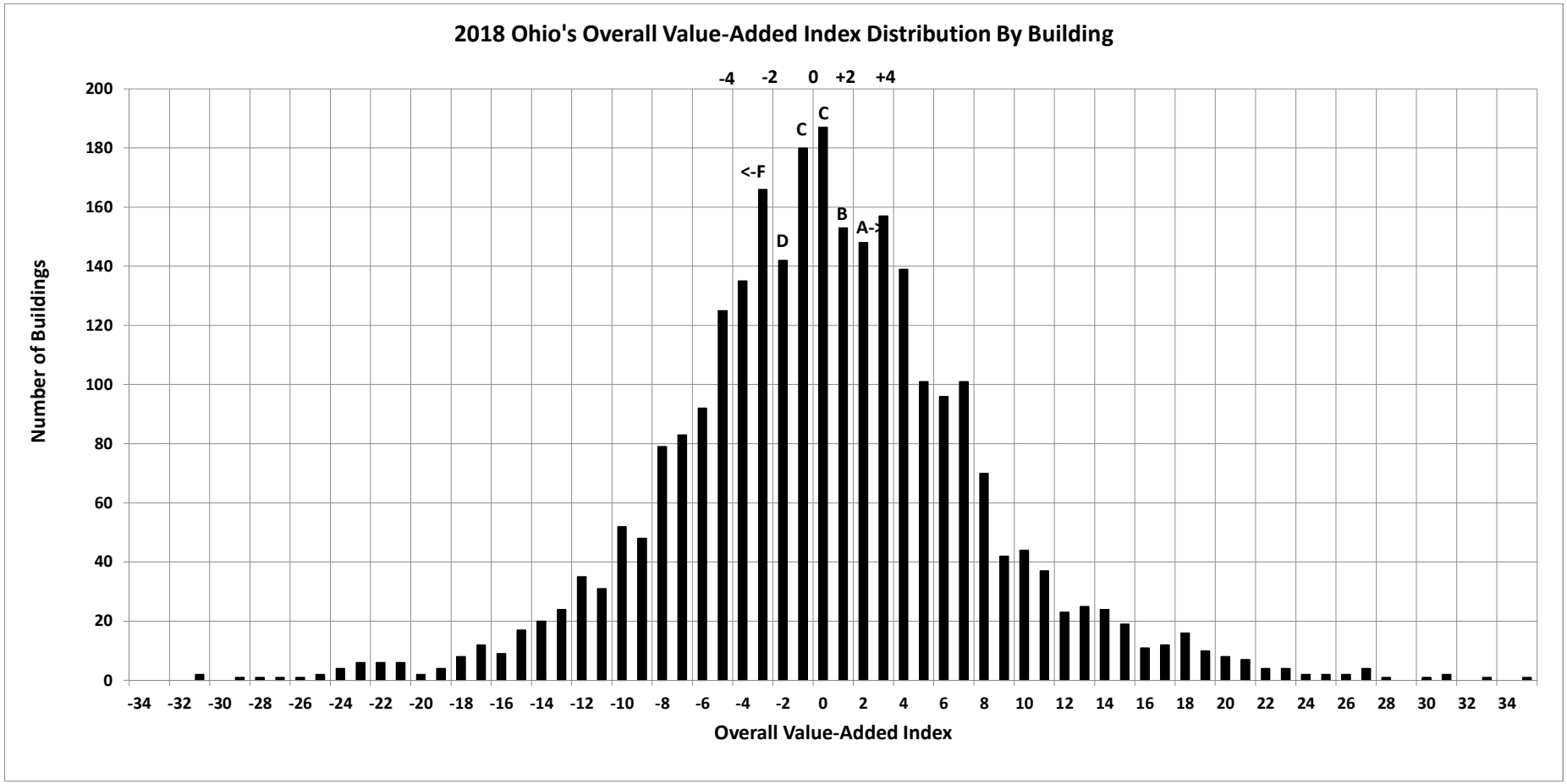
2018 Ohio's Overall Value-Added Index Distribution By Building
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Number of Buildings
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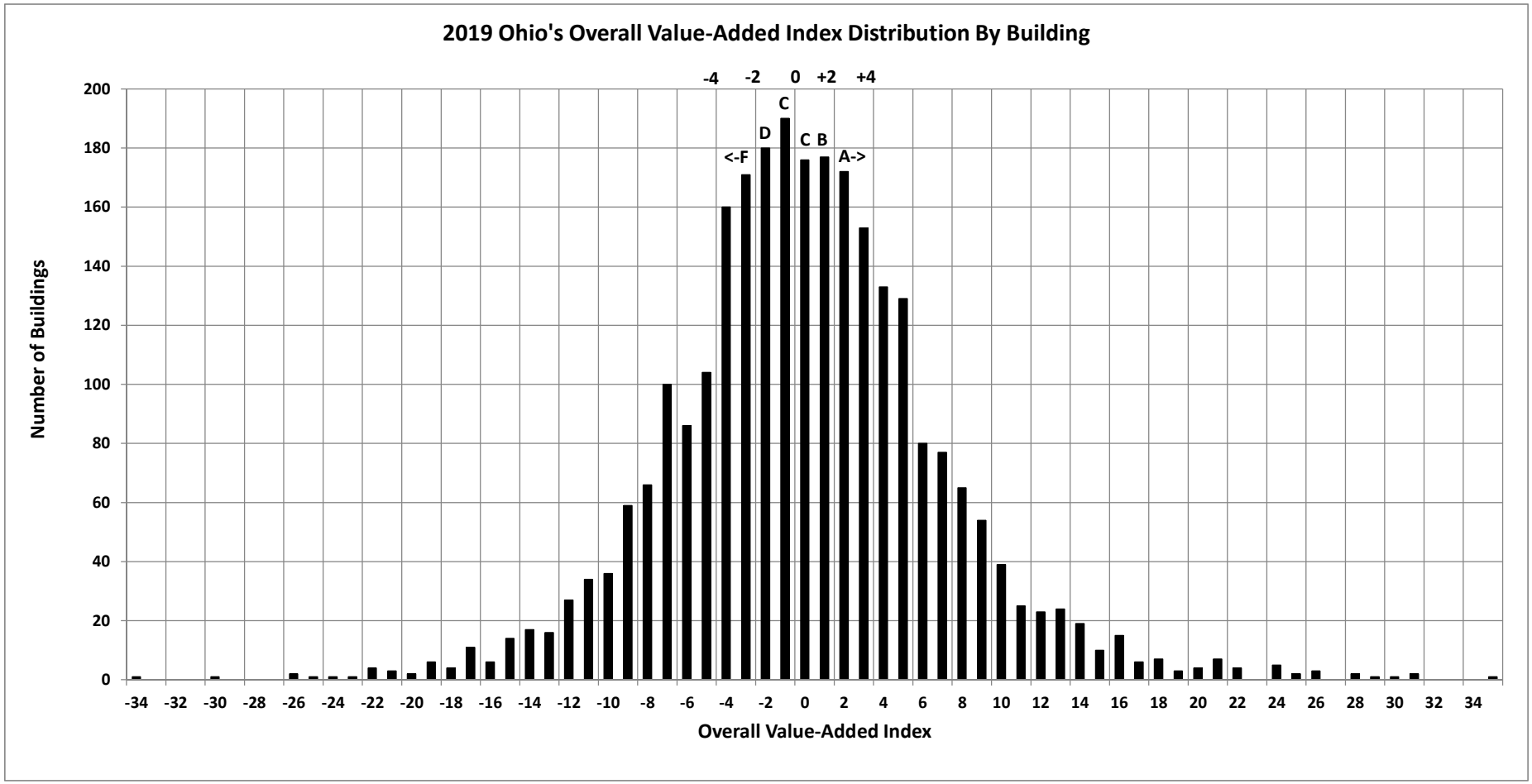
-34 -32 -30 -28 -26 -24 -22 -20 -18 -16 -14 -12 -10 -8 -6 -4 -2 0 2 4 6 8 10 12 14 16 18 20 22 24 26 28 30 32 34
Overall Value-Added Index


2019 Ohio's Overall Value-Added Index Distribution By Building
-4 -2 0 +2 +4
<-F
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Number of Buildings
200
180
160
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120
100
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20
0
-34 -32 -30 -28 -26 -24 -22 -20 -18 -16 -14 -12 -10 -8 -6 -4 -2 0 2 4 6 8 10 12 14 16 18 20 22 24 26 28 30 32 34
Overall Value-Added Index