

Good afternoon. Thank you Chairman Jones, Vice Chair Manchester and members of the committee.

I am here today to express my profound concern regarding the over-testing of our K-12 students in Ohio. While I am currently one of the newest members of the Columbus School Board, I previously spent 13 years as a special education teacher in Columbus City Schools. Prior to becoming a teacher, I practiced law – so I come to you from a somewhat unorthodox career path.

To be clear, I am not speaking today on behalf of the Columbus City Schools board of education. Instead, I would like to provide some insight from my experience implementing the AIR tests in the elementary school setting.

For eight years, I taught students with IEPs, most of whom were required to pass the state mandated graduation tests. Then, I moved to elementary school, teaching the same category of students for 5 more years.

Unless you are in that world, it is difficult to comprehend the amount of time spent preparing for and testing our students. What is even less obvious, unless you have lived through it, is the magnitude of the disruption to instruction and other important services provided to our students.

Let's take, for example, elementary AIR testing. The ELA test is administered during a three-week window every spring. That means that the school must schedule 6 mornings for testing (2 days of testing per grade). Each testing session requires a certificated teacher and a proctor. Testing sessions last at least 2 hours (taking into account getting students settled and logged in to computers, etc.). In addition to the grade level teachers, proctors often included instructional assistants, librarians, guidance counselors and specials teachers are called into service -- all of whom are taken from their primary functions.

In addition to these 6 testing sessions, special education students must be separately scheduled and tested. They require small group settings and extended time – often taking the better part of the school day. Special education teachers, who typically are assigned students across several grades, are unavailable for their other students during these sessions. Also, additional proctors – librarians, guidance counselors and instructional assistants -- must also be assigned to these testing sessions.

Finally, during this window, make-up tests for absent students must also be administered. These sessions also require a licensed teacher and a proctor. Each make-up requires two 2-hour testing sessions. This means counselors, librarians, administrators and when necessary teachers are further curtailed from providing

the primary services for which they are responsible. In practice, this entire effort takes up most, if not all, of the testing window.

Then, a few weeks later a new testing window opens when this entire effort will be repeated for Math for grades 3,4 and 5 and Science (grade 5).

Bear in mind that for most special education teachers, given that they often have students across multiple grade levels, it is possible that they administer tests for the vast majority of each window -- especially if they have makeups for their students.

It is important to understand that the limited availability of technology further complicates the scheduling challenges. It also deprives the rest of the school use of technology during testing sessions. In many schools, the library is closed completely for the entire testing window and non-testing classes are also deprived access to the computer lab.

This same process also takes place each fall with the 3rd grade ELA test.

In addition, elementary schools are required to administer Beginning of Year (BOY), middle of the year (MOY) and end of year (EOY) baseline testing. In CCS, we used NWEA's MAP test. This administration also requires computers but can be administered in the classroom without proctors. But it nonetheless detracts from instruction time and in the spring comes on the heels of the AIR testing, further disrupting instruction.

Although I have not administered the AIR test at the high school level – I left high school during the days of the OGT – I understand from my former colleagues that instruction is similarly disrupted during the entirety of each testing window. Similarly in high school, the special education teachers are most impacted, further disrupting instruction for our most needy students. Libraries are closed during testing windows and access to computers is severely limited during testing windows.

Please bear in mind what I am NOT addressing with this testimony. I am not addressing the time spent training, scheduling and administering this complex testing scheme. I am not addressing the emotional strain on our students nor the demoralizing effect on our teachers. I also am not addressing the magnitude of the lost and/or disrupted instruction time for all the non-testing students or the disproportionate loss of instruction time for our special education students. Most importantly, I am not addressing that despite decades of the education establishment attempting to use testing as a tool to improve education, it hasn't worked.

Having said that, I encourage this committee to seriously consider the importance of gaining a clear understanding of the amount of time and resources expending on testing of our K-12 students. Directing ODE to conduct a thorough review of this

and generate an annual report is a first and necessary step toward generating the critical understanding that will lead to meaningful reform.