



Chair Jones, Vice Chair Manchester, Ranking Member Robinson, and Members of the Ohio House Primary & Secondary Education Committee:

My name is Jeanne Melvin, and I am a retired public school teacher and president of *Public Education Partners*, a statewide advocacy group for public school districts and the children and families that they serve. Thank you for the providing the opportunity to submit written testimony to the House Primary & Secondary Education Committee concerning House Bill 239, known as the Testing Reduction Act.

A recent column by Peter Greene in Forbes reminds us all that this year's pandemic made the annual spring testing in our nation's schools both logistically impossible and generally pointless. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/petergreene/2020/05/16/without-the-big-standardized-test-would-schools-be-flying-blind/#3756ec956722> With a disrupted school year, there was no chance that the tests would generate any sort of usable information, and their cancellation raised two more questions:

1. Wouldn't state-mandated testing next year be equally pointless, particularly when the time could be better spent helping students catch up?
2. Wouldn't a two-year hiatus be the perfect time to end the practice entirely?

Some argue that more testing will be required when schools reopen to determine if students should move up a grade. They worry that if there's no standardized testing, then policymakers, administrators, researchers, parents, taxpayers, and students will not know what is happening inside each school. The perception that parents, teachers and students will have no idea about what's going on in their schools unless they can see scores from standardized tests is ridiculous. When students return to their schools, teachers will do what they have always done and use their own formal and informal assessments of students for information about where those students are.

Greene wrote that the standardized testing regimen has been falling out of favor with a wide variety of people for years, as noted in "Statewide Standardized Assessments Were in Peril Even Before the Coronavirus. Now They're Really in Trouble."

<https://www.educationnext.org/statewide-standardized-assessments-were-in-peril-before-coronavirus-bipartisan-backlash/>

The Board of *Public Education Partners* (PEP) concurs with this bipartisan backlash against standardized testing. We believe that our elected leaders must cut back on high-stakes testing mandates to abolish the practice of punishing schools, teachers,

families, and students for arbitrary test scores. We also believe that it's necessary to do away with the high school end-of-course state tests, as well as the mandatory retention attached to the 3rd Grade Reading Guarantee.

It bears repeating that the massive amount of feedback from the statewide ESSA stakeholder meetings and the ODE online survey (11,287 responses from Ohio's 88 counties) was overwhelmingly in support of less state-mandated testing and less test-based accountability. Philanthropy Ohio, the organization asked to make sense of the input from stakeholders reported that all sectors of the community—parents, families, teachers, administrators and community members—raised concerns about the assessments.

PEP believes that if national standardized testing is to continue, testing in Ohio should be limited to the federal minimum guidelines - there should be no state standardized tests beyond those mandated by the federal government. That's why the Board fully supports the *Testing Reduction Act*, House Bill 239, because it will reduce state-mandated standardized tests to the federal minimums. The bill will also require school districts to create local work groups made up of teachers, parents and administrators to examine district-required testing and make recommendations for ways to reduce the amount of time students spend taking tests even more.

We applaud those lawmakers who support HB 239 for listening to the thoughtful input of the thousands of Ohioans who were involved in forming the state's ESSA plan four years ago. Perhaps this global health crisis will help motivate their colleagues to finally heed the point of view of the majority of their constituents.

It's time for Ohio to end its test-and-punish philosophy, and replace it with an ideology of school district investment and improvement. Please support and promote HB 239.

Jeanne Melvin  
Public Education Partners

