



Chair Lehner, Vice-Chair Brenner, Ranking Minority Member Fedor, and Members of the Ohio Senate 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 providing the opportunity to submit this written testimony to the Senate Education Committee in support of Senate Bill 358, a policy to change education laws in response to COVID-19.

A column 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> Author Peter Greene writes that with a disrupted school year, there was no chance that the tests would generate any sort of usable information. Greene says that state-mandated testing in the 2020-2021 school year would be equally pointless and that a two-year hiatus would be the perfect time to end the practice entirely.

Jan Resseger, Ohio's own resident education expert, points out that this pandemic will force us to examine the widespread failure of standards-based school accountability. Resseger divulges that "No Child Left Behind" and the whole theory of standards-based accountability did not work, even though a lot of its assumptions continue to dominate federal requirements for state policy.

<https://janresseger.wordpress.com/2020/04/08/24035/>

Some people 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 finally 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.

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.

Senate Bill 358 will cancel state tests for the 2020-2021 school year, request a waiver from federally mandated tests, and establish a moratorium on state report cards. The bill will also allow course grades to be used for high school graduation requirements.

We applaud those lawmakers who support SB 358 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. Senate Bill 358 is a good place to start. Please support and promote it.

Jeanne Melvin
Public Education Partners

