Granville Exempted Village Schools and Upper Arlington City Schools
Testimony – House Bill 74
House Education Committee
March 11, 2015

JEFF BROWN

Chairman Hayes, Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Fedor of the House Education Committee, I am Jeff Brown, the Superintendent of Granville Exempted Village Schools. Here today with me is my colleague, Paul Imhoff, the superintendent of Upper Arlington Schools.

We appreciate the opportunity to testify as proponents of HB74, and as supporters of the New Ohio Learning Standards, however I would like to direct my comments to the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System or OTES, which I also strongly support. It is my intent that my suggestions might make OTES an even more meaningful process in the evaluation of teachers.

As you know, there are two sides to the OTES model. The Teacher Performance Rubric is based upon principal observation data and makes up 50 percent of the final summative rating. Student Growth Measures are based on student data and make up the other 50 percent.

The teacher performance rubric provides a great avenue for conversations from observations and clearly articulates our vision of effective teaching and learning. For the first time in education there is a universal platform for these conversations. Hopefully you have heard from the field how valuable the teacher performance rubric is in improving instructional practices. We strongly support this portion of the evaluation.

The Student Growth Measures are comprised of value-added data through state assessments, vendor assessments or teacher assessments called SLOs. For the moment, I would like to focus on the use of value-added data.

To provide context we have been a part of the Battelle for Kids SOAR project for over 10 years. We were using value added data long before it was included in the evaluation process. We have seen the benefits of value-added data in the hands of reflective teachers for many years. Unfortunately, the focus has changed from using the data to improve instruction to the impact on teachers' final summative ratings. We want teachers to embrace the data not be fearful of it. Simply stated - we have lost the value of value added.

We want to be clear, we are not advocating for value-added to be removed from the evaluation process, just to be put into the right seat on the bus. We would advocate for additional language to be inserted into the teacher performance rubric to guide the reflective process with teachers that is data based. Ensuring compliance with the

reflective process with administrative support will yield the results we all desire. Another approach could be to give districts a waiver option to use value added differently in the evaluation process. This suggestion may sound like a request for less accountability for teachers, but that is the exact opposite of our suggestion. Leave accountability at the building and district level on the local report card.

To summarize, we are encouraging the legislature to explore the utilization of value added in the evaluation process to maximize the impact on classroom practice and minimize the unintended consequences. We would also support the creation of a waiver process to give local districts latitude to use value added data the way it was originally designed.

PAUL IMHOFF

Chairman Hayes, Vice Chair Brenner, and Ranking Member Fedor, I appreciate the opportunity to join with my colleague Jeff Brown today and offer proponent testimony for House Bill 74.

Mr. Brown has very clearly outlined our thoughts on the OTES portion of this bill and our idea for additional language. I would like to offer some additional thoughts to explain our rationale.

Mr. Brown mentioned the ability value-added information has to inform classroom instruction. When used properly, it is an extremely powerful and valuable tool for educators. Value added is now also being used for the student growth portion of OTES, but it is not available for everyone. In fact, the majority of Ohio teachers do not have value-added data available to them, leaving us to rely on a system of SLOs and vendor assessments. There are concerns about the equity of using these different data sources for such a high stakes purpose as teacher evaluation. It appears we have tried to launch the student growth portion of OTES before we have all of the measures in place to do it well – in other words we are building the plane while we are flying it. Dr. Ross has recommended eliminating SLOs for many of our teachers and this is a good first step but more needs to be done to address the inconsistencies. We recommend allowing districts to apply for waivers to eliminate the student growth portion of OTES. In its place, we recommend strengthening the portion of the performance rubric that rates a teacher's effectiveness in using data to inform instruction.

OTES is a good model and the performance rubric has provided an excellent platform for teachers and administrators to discuss and pursue excellent instruction in every classroom for every student. Let's build upon what is working and use value added data as it was intended – to inform and improve classroom instruction.

I would also like to state my support for Ohio's New Learning Standards. This bill proposes a timeline for public input and suggestions for improvement – these are good ideas. I am always supportive of input and opportunities for improvement, but I would not be supportive of a wholesale overhaul of our new standards. They are good standards and we are on the right track in Ohio.

Finally, I want to express my support and thanks to this committee for taking up the issue of over testing in Ohio. As educators, we are committed to accountability and we support the use of quality assessments to inform and improve instruction. Unfortunately, in Ohio we have gone too far and we are simply subjecting our students to too many days of state testing. Thank you for your efforts to reduce state testing for our students so that our teachers can do what they do best – teach our students.

We would be happy to take your questions.