PYMATUNING VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL

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Chairman Hayes, Vice-Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Fedor and Members of the House Education Committee:

I come today to offer my support of House Bill 74. As I read it, House Bill 74 is a step in the right direction of reforming the assessment model used in Ohio Schools. It does not solve all of our problems, but it *IS* a start. The limiting of assessments; the efforts to bring assessments back to a more locally-controlled state model; the limiting of the resident educator program; and the development of standards that are created with advisement from all parties involved in education in Ohio are just a few of the highlights I saw. In fact, as I looked over the provisions of the bill and reviewed previous witness testimony, it appears that it has just about all of the support it needs to be successful in the General Assembly. As a result, I won't bother talking it up much. Instead, I'd like to push you to do more, perhaps even amend this bill as needed.

First, I beg you to stop using student assessment data as a means of evaluating teacher performance. Students are not widgets, machines, or products. They are living things that are impacted by a multitude of factors in their environments, each one unique to them. To try and calculate the success of teachers based on whether or not students pass or fail standardize tests would be like trying to calculate the success of an Ohio House Representative based on incarceration data and the ability of citizens to follow or break laws. In fact, connecting student test scores and teacher evaluations actually creates an unnecessary stress on students. Students that care for their teachers like 2nd parents want to make them look good by performing well on their tests, not to mention the stresses of high stakes graduation tests. I've seen good students cry, become ill, feign illness, or physically harm themselves by cutting or plucking their own eyebrows out because of the intensity of these assessments and the high stakes that are connected with them.

With regards to teacher performance, I've been an educator for 12 years. During that time I've both been evaluated and evaluated teachers using a locally controlled model and the OTES model. I can assure you that the locally controlled model was not only more effective in addressing poorly performing teachers, but it also was more expeditious, allowing more time for good teachers to do their jobs and more time for administrators to help professionally develop poorly performing teachers. With that being said, I was fortunate enough to be a part of several good systems, which brings me to my next point.

Please fight the urge to legislate generally across the state to solve the problems of a small handful of districts in the state. Some of the more recent legislative changes like the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System, the Next Generation Assessments, and new Graduation Requirements are being thrust upon educators across the state to fix problems that only exist in small pockets. Nothing damages morale quite like creating new policies that create more hoops to jump through for the masses because of the mistakes/lack of effort from a few. Instead,

provide ODE staffing and funding so that they can support the positively performing schools and help to address the needs of those who are not doing well.

And while we're discussing the catalysts for educational legislation, please allow me to encourage you to also fight the urge to legislate significant changes to our schools based on comparative analysis with foreign countries. Representative Patterson and I knew a young man from Tokyo by the name of Tomohiko Ozono when he was an exchange student during my sophomore year of high school. I've kept in touch with him and we've discussed education at length. Did you know that in Japan, students receive a public education through their middle school years, but if they don't perform highly, they lose that opportunity in high school? So is it fair then to compare the scores for all of our public high school students versus their best and brightest public high school students? These inconsistencies exist worldwide, but we continue to compare apples to oranges and rush to legislate based on the comparison.

This brings me to my next point. Please, be cautious of for-profit companies who want to tell you how poorly we've done as a whole in education in the United States. I've sat in way too many conferences recently to hear about all of the problems that exist in our schools that could be fixed if I just bought their software, installed their security system, or brought them to my school to speak, all for a small, but "worth-it" fee. I know my school, and I know our problems. I'm smart enough to seek out solutions to those problems where they actually exist. If you don't know your schools, speak with staff and students from them to discover their problems when you begin to write legislation.

Finally, while we're on the topic of knowing the problems of your schools, I want to thank Representative Patterson for working with us to try to help us address one of the problems EVERY school in Ohio is facing right now: the bogus calculation of graduation rates. The federal formula being used in our state to report graduation rates on our report cards is discriminatory, misleading, and creates a reported statistic that it is costing our entire state money. I only have 5 minutes and I'm sure I'm running short, but I beg each of you to do what you can to fix this corrupt statistic. Each year, based on report card data, teachers are reassigned, people lose jobs, some gain notoriety, and real estate agents actually will use (or try to hide) local school scores to sell property. These all have major impacts on the Ohio economy and its ability to attract businesses to come to our state. We need to be confident that this data is correct and I assure you the graduation rate is NOT. I beg each of you to inform yourselves on this bogus statistic by either visiting this page yourself or assigning an aide to do it. https://sites.google.com/site/ohiosschoolreportcards/
The information and examples *should be* staggering and make you seethe when you read them.

In closing, I would like to again reiterate my support of HB 74 as one of the first steps in helping to reform educational assessment. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you think I can be of any assistance to you in your future efforts to help the students of Ohio. Thank you for your time this morning.

Daniel Jackson, Principal
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