Testimony – House Bill 74
House Education Committee
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Chairman Hayes, Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Fedor and members of the Education Committee,

Thank you for hearing my testimony on HB 74. I am here today representing thousands of parents who do not agree or support the current excessive state assessments. I will address three main reasons for this widespread discontent.

Before I speak about these issues, I want to tell you a personal story about my son and his classmates. My oldest son is twelve years old and in 6th grade. On the day of his math PARCC, he was well rested and had a good breakfast, as requested by the teachers. As he leaves for school, he has a defeated attitude and sadly says, "We have all done terrible on the practice questions so this isn't going to go well." With some words of encouragement, I send him off. When he comes home from school that day, he is overwhelmed and completely stressed. He's not hungry, won't even think about reading his book and finally breaks down that evening. My son is a straight A/B student, Honor Roll, passes his OAA's every year. He did not finish 4 out of the 13 questions. My son tells me his good friend was so upset because he did not finish his test that he started to cry. Now this is not a young 5 year old. This is a smart, well adjusted, well liked kid who just hit his breaking point. Think back to when you were in 6th grade. For a boy this age to cry about a test just shows you what these tests are doing to our children. This has to stop!! Think of your children, grandchildren or nieces and nephews at age 9, 10, 11, 12 and think if you would want them to be in this situation. We as parents, do everything possible from the time they are born: learning to talk, ABC's, spelling words, reading together, flash cards, etc., to help them become intelligent children and adults. Teachers, of course, play a huge role in this also. BUT, now we are throwing them into these days and days of preparation and practice to completely destroy their interest in learning. At the end of the night, SIX hours after he came home from school, my son is lying in bed. I go in to say goodnight and how do I find him? With both hands, he is pulling his hair! I said, "Aiden, what's the matter?!" He said, "Mom, I am so mad right now because I flunked the test today." I tried to reassure him. And he said, "I might not have tears, but I am crying inside." And at that moment, I decided I would work and help change the testing in Ohio. My question…*How many kids are crying inside??*

My first main issue with the current way of testing with the PARCC is the lack of computer skills in many K-12 students. A number of the questions for all grade levels include typing essays, typing original stories, and comparing reading passages. This means we are asking 3rd graders who are age 9 and 10, to formulate answers in their head

and then remember what they want to say long enough to actually type it. From this age group? They have not had keyboarding classes and they do not have experience typing reports. But at the worst time, which is during a high pressure test time, they are being asked to type an essay. This is ludicrous! HB 74 takes a step to help this issue by not requiring school districts to administer the assessments online through the 2015-2016 school years. This does help school districts prepare their students for the typing aspect of the PARCC. But, the reality is that many students do not have access to computers at home. The school district in our town of Ashtabula has an 84% poverty level. Many households do not have desk top computers and are lucky to have food on the table. Asking these children to type effectively and correctly answer the PARCC questions is unrealistic. My hope is that the online remains an option and is not required for school districts longer than the 2015-2016 school years.

My second issue is the amount of time the PARCC test takes, which leads to loss of instructional time. The amount of time spent preparing and practicing is unbelievable, let alone the actual time to take the test. From September through April, teachers are expected to prepare, practice, administer and review, then start the same cycle over for the second round. This is clearly a test driven education. Homework is copies and copies of stapled packets. HB 74 does help by limiting the time to three hours per assessment. But parents also have a problem with the fact that the entire school year is based around these assessments. Teachers are under so much pressure that they spend the school year preparing for these tests and it completely overwhelms the classroom, leaving little time for inspiration or enthusiasm. These high stakes test are destroying the joy of teaching and the joy of learning – which is upsetting to parents whose kids hate going to school because it is boring. I also want to add that the blame should not be placed on teachers. My kids have wonderful, fantastic teachers every year, but their hands are tied. There are only so many hours in the day and ultimately what do you think is cut from the school day?

This leads me to the third main issue with the PARCC. Parents believe that there is a complete disintegration of enthusiasm and inspiration because of these assessments. Extreme testing does not lead to better educated kids. It leads to lowered confidence, a lack of enthusiasm for school and boredom. In so many districts, children come to school hungry, undisciplined and unfocused. In our district, as in many parts of Ohio, parents are not educated and therefore do not always have a value for education. They do not support the schools by voting for levies, they do not get involved with their child's education. The biggest positive influence most of these kids have is their time spent *inside* the school building. The best way to keep them interested in education and going to college is to inspire them with educational activities and engage them with fantastic lessons. We are jeopardizing this because of the pressure placed on these assessments. I ask you, what was your favorite subject in school? Government? Mathematics? World History? I would bet that your favorite subject would likely be because you had a teacher that connected with you. That teacher was excited, motivated and enthusiastic.

Motivated teachers will lead to motivated students. Kids will learn if they are interested and inspired! Teachers need to be freed of the frequent, multiple tests and be given the opportunity to inspire and motivate.

HB 74 is a step in the right direction to revise some issues with the PARCC assessments. But, I feel more needs to be done. I understand and appreciate the need for benchmarks and assessments. I also want to point out that in 2010, 26 states signed on to administer the PARCC. As the years went on, states realized the issues. In January of 2015, Mississippi dropped out. On March 9th, Arkansas voted 86-1 in favor of withdrawing from the PARCC. That bill was originally meant to make revisions in the House Education Committee, just like these hearings today. But they took a major turn and decided to withdraw. This leaves 9 states plus DC left in the PARCC consortium. What kind of consortium is that? How is Ohio supposedly comparing test scores across the country when there are only 9 states left in it? With Pearson under FBI investigation and the public outrage regarding their monitoring of students social media, this problem is not going away. The public is very aware and the feeling of distrust of Pearson is growing rapidly. PARCC is a sinking ship and Ohio needs to jump off now before we also go down! One thing is for sure, the majority of parents are very protective of their children, and we will join together to be sure their education is the absolute best it can be. I ask all of you to pass HB 74, but also consider future changes to the relationship between Ohio and PARCC. Parents will take notice!

Thank you,

Rejine DiSalvatore