

John R. Kasich, Governor
Dr. Richard A. Ross, Superintendent of Public Instruction

Testimony on the Education Provisions of House Bill 64, the FY16-17 Biennial Budget

Ohio Senate
Finance Subcommittee on Education
Senator Cliff Hite, Chair
April 29, 2015

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Chairman Hite, Vice Chairman Sawyer and members of the Senate Finance Subcommittee on Education, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today regarding House Bill 64. I am Stephanie Siddens, senior executive director for the Center for Curriculum and Assessment at the Ohio Department of Education. I will focus my testimony today on the governor's as introduced budget bill.

Our center encompasses programs for curriculum and assessment, early learning and school readiness and exceptional children. All of our work is focused on providing strong supports to schools, families and students to ensure all children enter kindergarten ready to learn and graduate from high school prepared and ready for success in their choice of either entering college or engaging in a career.

Angel Rhodes already spoke about the important work related to new early childhood education initiatives and the foundations established through Ohio's *Early Learning Challenge Grant*. The executive proposal's increases in early childhood education programs work toward ensuring students enter kindergarten ready to learn. I will speak about additional initiatives in the executive proposal that support the preschool to grade 3 continuum, as well as speak about how we use assessments to support children grade 3 and above.

Licensing Settings for Safety and Health

One of the department's functions is the licensing and monitoring of early childhood and school age child care programs. The department provides oversight and conducts on-site inspections for nearly 2,000 preschool and school-age child care programs in school districts, educational service centers, joint vocational school districts, county boards of developmental disabilities and chartered nonpublic schools to ensure basic safety and health standards, as well as educational standards, are met. Recommended appropriations of \$1.8 million in each fiscal year (GRF line item 200442) will increase the funding levels in this program to allow for additional staff to reduce staff-to-program ratios to levels in line with the staffing levels at the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services and recommended levels to adequately support programs in meeting standards. This will increase staff capacity to ensure the department adequately serves the increasing number of sites requiring licensure and to monitor

Funding also would be used to establish regional professional development teams. These teams would provide communication, outreach and professional development opportunities targeted to K-3 language and literacy supports. The department will help ensure teachers are using best practices and models to successfully help students meet the Third Grade Reading Guarantee.

Testing Reduction

The success of the Third Grade Reading Guarantee is an excellent example of why testing serves an important purpose for monitoring and improving student learning. However, there are opportunities for improved efficiency in Ohio's testing system. The governor and Dr. Ross are committed to reducing the testing burden on students, improving testing efficiency and maintaining accountability systems that ensure all students receive a high-quality education.

Testing is a fundamental part of effectively educating Ohio's children because, at its core, testing shows evidence of student progress. Ohio's testing system also serves to provide two checkpoints, in third grade and in high school, that are necessary to ensure that students are staying on track to succeed. Educators use the evidence provided by teacher tests to guide their teaching each day. District, state and federal officials also use test results to monitor and improve student learning.

Historically, certain populations of students have not received the same quality of education as their peers across Ohio. To address these equity challenges, Ohio began standardized testing two decades ago — long before No Child Left Behind — to hold all teachers, schools and districts accountable for every student's learning. This type of testing provides a snapshot of how students are performing based on a standard set of expectations. These test results are the foundation of Ohio's A-F school and district report cards and the student growth portion of Ohio's Teacher Evaluation System.

The department has spent significant time evaluating the comprehensive testing landscape in our state and has studied the amount of time students spend taking tests. Based on the data we received as part of our research for Dr. Ross's recent testing report, the average student in the average school will spend approximately 19.8 hours on testing in a school year, starting in the 2015-2016 school year. According to our recent analysis, testing constitutes only 1-3 percent of a typical student's time in school, depending on the grade level. In addition, most schools and teachers spend a significant amount of time preparing for standardized tests, especially state tests.

In his recent testing report, Dr. Ross made four legislative recommendations that would reduce student testing time by nearly 20 percent annually. The governor's budget includes these four proposals. First, the budget would limit the amount of time a student takes tests at the state and district levels to 2 percent of the school year and limit the amount of time spent practicing for tests to 1 percent of the school year.

Second, the budget shifts the administration of the third grade reading test from the fall to the spring. Students who do not reach the required promotion score on the spring test will have a second opportunity to take the test in the summer. Districts will continue to have the option of using a state-approved alternative test as a way for their students to show they are reading at grade level.

Third, the budget includes a proposal that would make the administration of the state's diagnostic tests in mathematics and writing for students in first through third grades optional. This recommendation gives districts local control to decide which diagnostic tests in writing and math are appropriate for their students in these grades.

Chairman Hite, this concludes my testimony. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to the subcommittee today about these important budget initiatives. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.