



Ohio 8 Coalition Interested Party Testimony
Ohio House Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education
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Chairman Cupp, Ranking Member Miller, and the members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education. On behalf of the Ohio 8 Coalition I appreciate the opportunity to share with you our testimony on the K-12 components of the State Operating Budget. My name is Adrian Allison and I am the Canton City Schools Superintendent and Co-chair of The Ohio 8 Coalition. The Ohio 8 Coalition districts serve nearly 200,000 students, more than 11% of the state's total student population. In the interest of time I will limit my remarks to the following three priorities but additional detail can be found within written testimony and supplemental documents you have before you. .

1. School Transportation
2. Graduation Requirements
3. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

1) School Transportation

School transportation is an issue The Ohio 8 Coalition first testified about in 2012 and has continued to do so before every relevant committee in both chambers every year since then. The Ohio 8 Coalition has data and the expertise to answer nearly any question related to transportation funding and operational challenges. In fact, our recommendation of workgroup to help address these issues was included in the previous operating budget but the group has never met. From our concerted effort on this issue we know that this is something all schools: rural, suburban, urban, traditional public or public charter schools, regardless of location or type agree upon. Let me be clear, fixing transportation for one type of school or district and not for the others does **nothing**. We must fix this for **all children** to allow all districts to meet their charge of getting children to schools safely and in an efficient and timely manner. We are anxious to leverage our collective expertise focusing on the following four issues and related recommendations as a starting point.

a. Bell schedules

State regulation states that transportation departments within public schools are prohibited from setting standard times to begin and end a school day for non-public or charter schools buildings. I will site the transportation reality at Dayton Public Schools where they transport to more non-DPS school buildings (charter, private, and parochial) than DPS buildings. This ratio is 31-30 for the 2016-2017 school year. This means a transportation system that is mandated to different start and end time for 31 different schools—this is in addition to the 30 DPS school buildings. The result is a system that is nearly impossible to achieve efficient routes, use of equipment, and most important of all, reducing the amount of time children spend on the bus.

b. State reimbursement vs. costs

State funds to support student transportation have not kept pace with actual costs of aging bus fleets, maintenance, and fuel. Currently, none of The Ohio 8 Coalition school districts is reimbursed for what they actually spend to transport students. Transportation expenses range from \$4,422,890 in Canton to \$51,772,367 for Columbus. The range of state reimbursement to school districts for transportation costs begins at \$3,286,092 in Canton and goes up to \$36,799,481 in Columbus. And with this budget, the gap likely will be made worse.

c. Excise tax

The existing motor fuel/excise tax that supports reimbursement for student transportation amount has sat at just 6 cents for several years. The excise tax supports mass transit and school bus transportation; and when it was established it addressed the needs of mass transit and schools buses when the use of highways wasn't what it is today nor did it take into consideration transportation to public, charter, private and parochial schools.

d. Special education supplement:

Existing transportation formulas do not take into account that special needs students, even if they are transported with traditional students, still may require additional assistance (such as an aide that travels with them). As we seek to mainstream more special education students onto traditional student buses, we must still be able to address their unique needs. We want to continue to mainstream special education students onto traditional buses, but we must ensure their continued costs due to special needs remain covered.

Recommendations

- Eliminate the bell schedule restriction
- Increase the K-12 reimbursement rate for all school districts
- Revise the excise tax to better reflect the realities of school transportation in 2017
- Maintain the special education supplement even when students are mainstreamed
- Leverage Ohio 8 Coalition national expertise by moving the transportation work group from the previous operating budget into implementation phase.

2) Graduation Requirements

Presently the state of Ohio expects a student to demonstrate college and career readiness based on assessments that are typically given in 9th and 10th grade and requires the achievement of 18 points to graduate. This section of our testimony outlines our concerns regarding the notion that Ohio can successfully measure college and career readiness based on content that is typically addressed in 9th grade or in 10th grade. Instead, we should give students the entire length of high school to demonstrate that they've reached a certain level of knowledge via state assessment and grades in advanced level courses to achieve that readiness label. Our concerns and recommendations below provide ways in which to provide this flexibility and a more accurate demonstration of readiness.

- Our first concern is two-fold:
 - First, Ohio's reliance on a small set of assessments (English, Mathematics, and Sciences/Social Studies) that are typically given in 9th and 10th grade ensures that the state is only determining partial college and career readiness. The current

system does not allow for advanced English or Mathematics courses, which are presumably more rigorous, to be used to demonstrate readiness.

- Second, the state's reliance on a limited set of assessments perpetuates a cycle of remediation by forcing educators to focus on retesting students in lower-level assessments while they may be enrolled in higher-level coursework.
 - **Our Recommendation:** While the Ohio 8 Coalition does not recommend additional assessments be added to the system, the Coalition does believe that students should be able to use their demonstrated proficiency in higher-level courses such as trigonometry towards satisfying the requirements for graduation. Examples of these courses include, advanced English, trigonometry, and calculus.
- Despite the abundance of advanced opportunities for students being offered in the state, Ohio's current graduation requirements cap the total points students can earn through the opportunities to demonstrate college and career readiness at 35 points, limiting a student's ability to demonstrate career and college readiness through additional available achievements such as calculus, and advanced English.
 - **Recommendation:** We have limited opportunities for students to demonstrate college and career readiness in their 9th and 10th grade years. This is too early to demonstrate readiness without the flexibility to leverage advanced courses and continued student growth. Expanding the number of opportunities that students can use to earn points toward graduation will allow students to accumulate evidence of career and college readiness.
- Finally, The Ohio 8 Coalition believes that an incremental plan is needed to transition to the graduation point system to allow time for students to adjust to the new requirements.
 - **Recommendation:** Submitted with our testimony is a memo that includes a chart outlining our recommendation for a phased in approach, which will ensure that Ohio's graduation requirements are both rigorous and attainable.

3) Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

One of the foundational propositions of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which replaced No Child Left Behind (NCLB) at the end of 2015, was the intent to give states and local school districts more control over how learning takes place and how performance is measured in their state, districts, and schools. While there are a few bright spots in the implementation plan proposed by ODE, such as the improvements related to English Learner identification, The Ohio 8 Coalition is concerned that the unique opportunities afforded under ESSA were largely ignored in deference to the state's existing approach under NCLB.

Specifically, the state has an opportunity to fix how we measure growth by determining a meaningful, transparent, and accurate means of identifying the state's lowest 5% of schools including aligning school improvement entrance criteria with exit criteria. Instead, the current

draft plan by ODE relies on the existing system and decades-long approach of top down state control.

Value Added

Ohio's current value added measurement is broken and the measurement and the application of value added is completely inadequate relative to its original purpose. There must be a meaningful and comprehensive statewide conversation around a measure that accurately reflects student growth and performance. The measure cannot rely on the K-12 system to resolve all issues related to the non-academic needs of students, many of which directly affect student achievement. Value added has failed as a measurement due to the following:

- Value value-added is no longer used for its original intention, which was to measure the growth of a student in one academic year.
- The measure can and should directly control for demographics, but it is not being used in that way.
- Value added is supposed to yield consistent results but due to the inconsistent application, the results at district and school levels are inconsistent.
- Additionally, The Ohio 8 Coalition Teacher Union Presidents believe that value added is now being used to evaluate and measure teacher performance even though it was not built to address that issue. The Ohio 8 Coalition Teacher Union Presidents strongly believe that value added, should not be used to evaluate teachers.

The passage of ESSA and the drafting of a state plan was a prime opportunity for Ohio to reexamine this critical component of the accountability system. Instead, ODE's plan continues to rely on it despite acknowledging some of these critical deficiencies. While this conversation is complex, it should not be ignored for a later time, but instead should be integrated into the state's overall education plan required by ESSA.

Authentic School Improvement

Unlike in the past, local schools and districts have the opportunity under ESSA to develop customized improvement plans that support the challenges faced by their students and community.

Two components of the state's plan that fail to embrace this opportunity are the state's identification and exit criteria of the state's lowest performing 5% of schools and the state's proposed continuum of support. The state's plan continues to over-rely on the flawed, complex report card measures to determine how support is initiated and ended. There are several critical consequences of continued use of the current report card system: First, the report card results have proven to be confusing to parents, educators and community members. For example, one year a district will receive an "A" on a measure. The next year, while continuing to use and improve on the same instructional strategies that resulted in the "A" the previous year, the district receives an "F" on the same measure. This scenario is common for Ohio 8 districts.

Moreover, several analyses of the state report card system have concluded that the report card outcomes (grades) are highly correlated with the economic status of the district or school. In other words, districts and schools with high poverty and other high incidences of academic and

non-academic barriers to learning, including all of the Ohio 8 Coalition districts, are more likely to receive the lowest grades on the state's report card. The report card results are not student-focused, equitable, transparent, or stable. Yet, under the state's plan, this is how the state's lowest-performing 5% of schools and continuum of support will be determined.

What's worse is that the state's entrance and exit criteria are misaligned which could lead to more and more schools entering comprehensive support without a realistic opportunity to exit. Further, the exit criteria established by ODE ensures that once a school is targeted for improvement, they will likely never be removed from that status.

Recommendation: The Ohio 8 Coalition has drafted a detailed recommendation plan to address these and other concerns with the state's proposed plan. In the interest of time, I will not fully address the content of these recommendations, but you have them in front of you and we are willing to discuss them with you at your convenience.

Overall, The Ohio 8 Coalition views the current state implementation plan as a missed opportunity. The good news is we still have plenty of time to get it right. While the state is currently focused on an April submission date for the plan, the federal government also affords states the opportunity to submit in September. Taking advantage of this later opportunity will ensure that Ohio's efforts under ESSA include meaningful changes to Ohio's K-12 system to best support the needs of all students.

Thank you for the opportunity to share these recommendations. We look forward to continuing to help in any way we can as the budget process continues.