



EDUCATION
COMMITTEE

Witness Form

Today's Date Nov 6, 2017

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Organization Representing: MINSTER LOCAL SCHOOLS

Testifying on Bill Number: SB 216

Testimony: Verbal Written Both

Testifying As: Proponent Opponent Interested Party

Are you a Registered Lobbyist? Yes No

Special Requests: NONE



Minster Local Schools

Mission: Challenging Today's Students to Become Tomorrow's Leaders

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Proponent Testimony for SB 216

Dear Chairperson Lehner, Vice-Chair Huffman and members of the Ohio Senate Education Committee.

My name is Brenda Boeke and I am Superintendent of the Minster Local School District in Auglaize County. I would like to thank Sen. Huffman for his work on this bill and to the committee for proceeding with hearings.

I would like to express my support for SB 216, Public School Deregulation Act. Deregulation as defined by Google dictionary is to remove restrictions. Over time well intended legislation has compounded to the point where the number of restrictions on our public school system has limited our ability to be effective. I'd like to specifically address two areas of deregulation in SB 216: Student Testing and Student Management.

Please know that I am a strong supporter of accountability and believe measurers should be in place to ensure all schools in Ohio are held accountable to the standards set forth by their communities and the state. To that end, the current accountability system in place for assessing Pre-School, Kindergarten, and First-Third grade programs is not in the best interest of students attending Minster Local Schools. Each accountability measure is currently a stand-alone measure and are not aligned with one another.

As a school district, we do not receive information of value to assist us in meeting the needs of our students from the Step Up To Quality or the KRA assessments. The Step Up To Quality assessment is used with 13 of our 60 kindergarten students. These are the students who attend our public special needs preschool. The remaining 47 students attend local private preschools and do not and are not required to use Step Up To Quality. To provide us with the necessary information to make informed decisions about students we use a standardized Kindergarten Diagnostic Instrument (KDI) at our Kindergarten screening meetings in the spring prior to the start of the year. As an FYI, the KRA is not permitted to be given in the spring prior to the start of the year. Each student is assessed using the KDI and the results identify potential strengths and weaknesses of each child. The results are shared with parents to help them make an informed decision about sending their child to kindergarten or to send them to preschool another year. Once our kindergarteners are enrolled in the fall we begin our aligned district assessment practice by assessing our students using the NWEA MAP assessment. Each kindergarten-third grade student is benchmarked three times a year in order for our teachers to monitor progress and develop appropriate measures to meet the third grade reading guarantee. Our kindergarten teachers then have to administer the stand alone KRA, which is an individually measured assessment that takes our teachers out of the classroom and away from their students. This assessment is in addition to our

aligned NWEA MAP diagnostic. Minster is not alone in this practice. Many school districts around the state of Ohio administer the KRA in addition to their district aligned diagnostics. The state department lists in the "Third Grade Guarantee Guidance Manual", eight approved comparable tools for screening Kindergarteners. NWEA MAP is one of them. Why is the KRA the only additional stand-alone diagnostic? Could the KRA be an optional assessment? I have heard argument that the KRA is needed to prove preschool programs work? We are in complete agreement that preschool works, but could the department of education develop a crosswalk using the eight approved comparable diagnostics in order to provide data to support the continued need for pre-school? Having one stand-alone diagnostic is not what is in the best interest of students. Please eliminate this unnecessary restriction.

Additionally basing the K-3 Literacy component of the grade card on the number of students off track from one year to the next does not correlate in any way to the third grade reading guarantee. At Minster we give our off track students every opportunity to improve their reading ability. We provide extra resources to those students and have been very effective. We have had a 100% promotion rate since the third grade reading guarantee was in place, yet we received an "F" in the K-3 literacy component last year. We received the F because we kept our vulnerable, barely on track students on our off track list, in order to provide them as many resources as possible. We didn't show enough growth from one year to the next, yet all our third graders met the promotion score. There is something wrong with how this component is calculated. The K-3 Literacy Component needs to be eliminated or at the very least re-evaluated.

One final request in support of SB 216 is to remove the excused absence requirement from the current definition of excessively absent. Ohio parents are incredibly supportive of their children. We have found Minster parents, like most parents provide for their children's basic needs as well as providing opportunities for enrichment. Including excused absences in the definition of excessively absent sends the message to parents that taking their child to the doctor or dentist, or providing family excursions is not important. We are incredibly blessed to have supportive parents living in our community. They understand the importance and value of education but also understand what it means to be a parent. Including excused absences in the definition of excessive absences sends a mixed message to the high quality parents residing in Ohio.

Thank you for your time in reading my testimony. I would be happy to address any comments, questions or concerns regarding my remarks.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Boeke
Superintendent
Minster Local Schools