Senate Education Committee

December 13, 2017

Opponent Testimony on Senate Bill 216

Good afternoon Chair Lehner, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the Senate Education Committee. My name is Jesús F. Sánchez and I am the Education Director for the Cuyahoga Valley Environmental Education Center in Northeast Ohio and Alumni Fellow for the National Institute for Latino School Leaders.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about Senate Bill 216. I am here as an opponent to the bill and will focus my concerns on the proposed language regarding maintaining a minimum N-size of 30.

* The transition/phase-in proposed in Ohio’s State ESSA plan from 30 to 15 over time is a fair transition for schools and districts. In fact, it reflects a compromise from the original ESSA proposal and balances both the needs of families and students and the concerns of our educators. – Ohio is not proposing to “flip the switch” from 30 to 15 overnight. The stepped in approach calls for an
* N-size of 25 in the 2017-2018 school year, 20 in the 2018-2019 school year and 15 in the 2019-2020 school year. This gives schools and districts time to prepare.
* Ohio’s transition to a lower “N-size” reflects best-practice education policy and more importantly is good for our children. The three-year transition will allow districts time to identify struggling students and identify best practice interventions to help these students succeed.
* If the N-size is set at a higher number, subgroups such as English Language Learners, the majority of whom are Spanish speaking, will not be considered in the accountability system. Even at an N-size of 15 there are still a very low percentage of students included for several subgroups. For example, only 1% of Asian students, 4% of Latino students, and 2% of English Learners will be evaluated. Said another way, only 15% of schools will be evaluated for ELs, and 27% of schools will be evaluated for Latino students. These numbers are unacceptably low. Raising the N-size would only make for a further reduction in the number of schools held accountable for these groups of students. I contend that all students should be part of the monitoring for schools.
* We know that what gets measured, gets paid attention to and improved
* When my family first moved permanently to Ohio from Puerto Rico we resided in a community in Northeast Ohio in which the school was not set-up to support the language barrier that my sister experienced. Unable to read and write in English, she did not receive the adequate support she needed nor was it a priority for the school. My sister was placed into a lower grade level and quickly lost confidence in her learning abilities from which she never fully recovered. A lower N-size means that students who are part of subgroups that do not meet the N-size minimum and struggling, much as my sister did, will not be accounted for and will likely not receive the necessary support within their schools to advance and be confident in their learning abilities to succeed.
* It is important to identify additional struggling students, so they can receive the supports and interventions that will allow them to succeed. I do not want what happened to my sister to happen to other students in our education system today. The stakes are too high with the new economy. Everyone must be prepared and the earlier we intervene the more likely that is to happen.

Please note the charts below to see the numbers of students we are discussing – it is not just one or two students, but tens of thousands. Based on the table below it is estimated to be approximately 65,000 additional students that would be targeted for supports -- that is significant, fair and the right thing to do for our students.



 



Thank you for allowing me to testify today and share my concerns about SB 216. I believe that reducing the N-size to 15 is what best for kids and will help Ohio strengthen supports and improvements for our all of Ohio’s students. I would be happy to answer any questions the committee might have.