

Chairman Hite, Vice Chair Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance - Primary and Secondary Education Subcommittee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today. My name is Brittany Alexander and I am a public school educator of (almost) 20 years. I am an education activist, serving in leadership roles in both National and Ohio BATs (Badass Teachers Association). I strongly urge that the subcommittee include language offering a “safe harbor” from standardized testing requirements to specific students in the Class of 2018 to Substitute HB 49.

To my knowledge, there is not state-level data on where students land in relation to earning a minimum of 18 points in the End of Course (EOC) exam pathway, explaining the variance in reports of the number of students whose graduation will be negatively affected. The recommendations sent forth from the State of Ohio Board of Education are commendable in that they reduce the role of standardized testing in graduation requirements. However, even with these recommendations in place, there will still be some number of students who land between being able to meet 2 out of the 6 recommendations and earning 18 points on EOC exams. Those students who are between these two options, and have met all other graduation requirements, will still be in the same situation they are in now: an untenable one.

The Class of 2018 is not only the first to be held to the pathway graduation requirements, but they are also the only people in Ohio to be accountable (i.e. without “safe harbor”) for PARCC assessments they took during their freshman year. In an effort to “make up” points needed for graduation, students with a score of 1 or 2 on any PARCC assessment have to retake their EOC exams with American Institutes of Research (AIR) assessments. Educators know that these retakes have a high cost of lost instructional time.

The “safe harbor” for which I am advocating is a short-term solution intended to help specific students in the Class of 2018. However, it is important to note that Ohio is one of only 14 states that currently require exit exams for high school graduation. In the long-term, I advocate that we rid Ohio’s students of EOC exams tied to graduation requirements. To foster and develop the skills students need beyond their K-12 years, we have to switch our focus away from high-stakes standardized tests.

I ask you to consider my testimony and provide “safe harbor” from EOC tests to students who will land in between the recommendations from the State Board and the requirements of the EOC exam pathway. Their very future is in your hands. Thank you again for your time and consideration.