

Chair Blessing and members of the committee,

Thank you for hearing my testimony in support of HB239 today.

I am Odessa Robinson, the Senior Class President of the Fort Hayes Arts and Academic High School class of 2019. Just last Thursday, my classmates and I graduated from Columbus City Schools; however, at the start of the 2018-19 school year, sixty four percent of my graduating class was not on track to graduate because of the AIR test. The accomplishment that they had worked their entire academic lives for was now at risk. Imagine being in your last year of high school, and facing the possibility of not earning your high school diploma. What could be scarier?

Over half of the same people I've known the minds of since the age of 12, seemed to be struggling and anxious over a test that had the power to prevent them from graduating.

Many of my friends stopped planning for their futures. They didn't apply to college. Some of them stopped attending school regularly. Many of them had taken these tests over and over without getting any better at them. They were defeated.

In our poem, "Suffocating on AIR," I play the role of the robotic test proctor. We hate that our teachers are reduced to this role for so much of our school year. We need our teachers to be compassionate and creative, not cold and robotic.

In the end, 97% of my classmates graduated on time. This shows that they are accomplished humans and the only thing holding them back from their future was a test with an arbitrary cut score that is graded by robots.

Passing HB239 will go a long way to ensure that no graduating class suffers this way. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Odessa Robinson