

HB 239 Proponent Testimony: Austin Marsh

Chairman Jones and Members of the Committee:

My name is Austin Marsh, I am a sophomore at The University of Akron studying Family & Consumer Science Education (FCS), Child & Family Development and also working toward a certification in Parent and Family Education. I am an Executive Project Manager for the Undergraduate Student Government as well as a University Ambassador, among a multitude of other things. Within my career path, I will teach my students life skills. Things like basic foods and nutrition, clothing construction, career-based skills, college preparedness, personal finance and many other things that are learned through experience, rather than testing.

Representatives Manning and Crawley have acknowledged an issue that has been a topic of conversation for quite some time within the realm of education: the over testing of the youth, which, for many, has brought forth some of the negative impacts that it can have on their lives. As a recent high school graduate, I can personally attest to the strain that these tests can put on a high school student that may also be experiencing things within their home lives that will impact their score, which is usually an untrue deciding factor in a student's high school academic career. For example, as I was beginning to study for the Ohio Graduation Tests (OGTs), we received news that my father's health was beginning to decline from his 12-year battle against cancer. As a high school sophomore, this was devastating news that would impact my mental capacity and ability to do my everyday schoolwork, let alone study for an exam that would determine whether or not I was capable of graduating based on a stereotypical set of skills; I lost my father in July of 2014 to this battle. Students across the state face things like this on a daily basis, outside forces that have a profound impact on their academic lives, but yet they are simply judged by the score that they are able to produce on paper. If we were all to sit down today and take some of the state mandated tests to decide whether or not you are able to remain in your seats, how many of you are confident that you would be in the same spot tomorrow? How many of you think the things that you have going on in your life may inhibit you from preparing in a proficient manner to provide a score that is high enough for you to return?

Now think about the breakfast you ate this morning, the bed you slept in last night, the faces you were able to see as you walked out of your door this morning. This is your reality, but it may not be the reality for many students across the state. It is a very harsh reality that we have students coming to school that have not eaten since the last meal they had at school. Students that got home late because they had to work to help provide for their family and slept on the couch, or even on the floor. Students that had to get themselves up, make sure they made the bus and got to school, because their parent(s) didn't come home last night. These test scores do not take into account the things that happen outside of school, but yet they determine what the student's future will look like. I know many individuals that have been kept away from their goals due to the discouragement that they receive when their scores.

Putting together a group of individuals from the community that include teachers, parents and administrators to examine district-required testing will give a transparent opportunity for

individuals to express their viewpoint and ensure that there is diverse representation when making decisions to lower the amount of time that a student spends in a chair taking a test. The application of the knowledge that these students are being given is extremely important, but a #2 pencil on a scantron is not the way to do it. We need to ensure experiential learning opportunities for our students, meaningful experiences that will give them knowledge and skills to navigate the hardships they may currently be experiencing and provide them with a stable foundation to build a successful and prosperous future. As these groups are formed, I ask that each of you, as representatives, reach out to these groups and offer your support for them and stay informed so that you are able to accurately advocate on behalf of current and future voters.

Decreasing the amount of state testing and creating groups to analyze district testing in order to decrease the time that a student spends testing and create more ideal ways of collecting data will give educators the opportunity to spend more time in the classroom with their students. This will foster positive connections between the students and the staff, faculty and administration of the school. In turn, the increased instructional time will allow the student to ask more questions, enable the educator to individualize instruction in order to facilitate constructive conversation and deliver useful knowledge in a way that is beneficial to the entire class, as well as decrease the stress of both the student and educator. As much as we think about the student, we also must consider the stressors experienced by educators that want nothing but for their students to succeed, but this is often hindered by the time required to ensure the students are prepared for the next round of tests.

As an aspiring educator, I am asking you on behalf of the current youth as well as my future students, that you support this bill so that we are able to provide a prosperous learning environment for both the current and future student population of the state of Ohio.

Thank you. I urge your support for HB 239.