



CLEVELAND TEACHERS UNION

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Tracy Radich Testimony on SB 358

Senate Education Committee

SB 358 Proponent Testimony

Presented by Tracy Radich,

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Chair Lehner and Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Fedor and members of the Education Committee. My name is Tracy Radich. I am a fourth grade teacher at Joseph Gallagher Elementary School in Cleveland, Ohio. I am also the 1st Vice President of the Cleveland Teachers Union. Thank you for this opportunity to testify on SB 358.

For at least the first nine weeks of this school year, our entire school district is doing all learning remotely. The decision for all remote learning (for at least the first quarter of school) was made based on our county and city being in the red on the state's COVID monitoring system, our parent survey which overwhelmingly indicated that parents were not willing to send their children in person and would opt for remote learning, and eventually our county Health Department recommending that all schools in our county should start the year in a remote learning environment.

This is the beginning of my 27th year of teaching and I have to say WOW. I certainly never expected anything like this. Each day my students log in and our classes are held via Zoom. I teach lessons, students share answers, have discussions, read aloud, move into small groups or get one-to-one assistance via break out rooms. Students also complete assignments, work on individualized skills targeted based on their individual level, read books and stories and more - all through different platforms. Our students are lucky to have so many platforms available to them, yet it is all new. Students have to be shown step-by-step how to access and utilize these platforms. All of this has taken time to learn so that students can maneuver and skillfully get from one place to another. I must say I am very impressed with how well my 9 and 10 year olds are doing as they embrace this technology and their new world.

The parents of my students and in our entire school community have been especially gracious, patient, and supportive. We have been in contact with every single family and our successes in our first 2 weeks of remote learning are because of the true partnership between our educators and our families. This experience is bringing us all closer together.

Whether all remote like I am in Cleveland, or hybrid where students come to school 2 days a week and spend the other days independently working from home, or all in person where a teacher teaches students in-person while those families who have opted for all remote are taught simultaneously from their homes – this is a significant shift for educators, students, and families. That is why I personally as a teacher and more globally as the 1st Vice President of my Teachers Union appreciate this

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opportunity to share my experience teaching during this very upside down time in education and speak specifically regarding two components of this bill.

Please continue the exemption on student testing. As a teacher, there are many ways that I can assess my students and plan accordingly to meet the needs of my students. My time needs to be dedicated to helping my students get back on track, helping my students to succeed in remote learning, and ensuring that there is joy in that learning. Testing is costly. Is it worth the cost of the tests when there are other, better ways to monitor student needs during this time of crisis? During this time when districts are spending millions of dollars on technology, PPE, ventilation, and other expenses directly related to educating children safely during this global pandemic. Student testing as we know it in Ohio is an unnecessary stress for our students and their families that are supporting them. Testing is very time consuming in a normal school setting. In the remote world, it is going to take even more time. It may take triple the amount of time. How will I monitor testing remotely to ensure that a child has a quiet place to work, with no assistance from a family member or from Google? How do I deal with internet bandwidth issues? How will I tamp down the anxiety of students and their families when we are not together? I have the ability to assess children in small chunks. Even remotely, I have the ability to work with students in small groups and one-on-one to assess where they are and determine what they need individually. Federal and state required tests seem to be an unnecessary burden to place on our students and families during this time. Our time now is so valuable and is so much better served directly teaching and learning.

Please suspend evaluation for teachers, paraprofessionals, and related service providers during the 2020-2021 school year. Teachers in my school district and across the state are under enormous pressure learning to educate children in this new environment. Everyone, whether remote or in-person, has been forced to do things in ways that we have never done before. It is like a whole state of first year teachers, but only if you did not have student teaching. It is time consuming and stressful to completely change the way we deliver instruction. I have heard my Superintendent Eric Gordon many times talk about growing up in the Toledo area. In Toledo they manufactured automobiles. Each time the production of a particular vehicle would come to an end, the plant would shut down and the workers would spend the next 3-4 months being retrained how to produce the new vehicle. That is essentially what we are doing in education right now. We are retraining. We had some time to prepare in the weeks before our students started, but there is ongoing training and learning that is happening each day. This is a time to suspend formal evaluations and focus on development of teachers. It is time for support and coaching. Stress is high, the learning curve is grand, and we need to focus on the task of teaching and learning during a time when our students need us to focus on that the most.

Thank you for listening and taking action to help our students, our educators, and our schools. This concludes my testimony and I will gladly answer any questions that you have.