

Committees:

Vice-Chair, Primary & Secondary Education
Agriculture & Conservation
Health
Higher Education & Career Readiness



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Sponsor Testimony
House Bill 67
Before the House Primary & Secondary Education Committee

February 9, 2021

Chair Manning, Ranking Member Robinson, and Members of the House Primary & Secondary Education Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 67 along with my joint sponsor, Representative Koehler. I'd like to speak today about why I am joint sponsoring HB 67 and why I believe this legislation is important as we seek to move our schools forward during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Students and families are emotionally fragile like never before. Student attendance and teacher attendance is worse than it has ever been. In fact, teacher attendance is so poor that we have seen classes have to be covered by aides, school resource officers, and in some cases it's even been necessary for the Superintendent to teach classes. We can observe a wide inequity of preparation by schools, teachers, and students during this time across a wide variety of learning platforms: some schools are able to have students in class 5 days a week and in person, while others have had to turn to hybrid models, fully virtual classes, or temporary virtual classes. As a result of these differing needs and practices across our state, not all students have had the same access to education during the pandemic.

As Rep. Koehler mentioned in his testimony, HB 67 waives state testing requirements for the 2020-21 school year and requires Superintendents to seek a waiver for federal testing requirements. This is an important step towards ensuring equity among Ohio's students. Consider this, for example: Students who have had to participate in a virtual classroom model for this academic year will have to come back into school to take the mandated assessments. Some – in fact, many – of those students have said they would refuse to do so. State required assessments assume a "Standard of Instruction." That "Standard" does not exist this year. HB 67 acknowledges that reality, and what we seek to do in this bill is not an unprecedented step. The NAEP (National Assessment for Educational Progress) has already been cancelled due to the inconsistent results it would produce.

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We don't need this test to tell us we are behind. Good schools have already been giving formative assessments all year long and know where their student gaps are. (MAP, DIBELS, STAR, Pro-Core, Aspire, and Practice AP just to name a few.) If given, these mandated tests will inevitably – and unfairly – be used to compare schools.

For a school principal, building a testing schedule is complicated. It requires "All hands on deck." All of those best laid plans can be shot when a quarantine of teachers or aides happen. Not to mention, depending on when it begins, a quarantine of students could make them miss the testing window altogether. And finally, just to touch on one of the technical challenges which schools may encounter: Some schools have loaned out Chromebooks like library books and may never see those Chromebooks returned – the same Chromebooks which are predominantly used to administer the tests.

Having come from a long background in education prior to my time here as a state legislator, I hope my perspective provides some insight into why it is in the best interests of Ohio's schoolchildren to waive the testing requirements for the current academic year. Thank you again for the opportunity to present this information – at this time, Representative Koehler and I would be happy to answer any questions.