

WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

Please complete the Witness Information Form before testifying:

Date: 2-15-2021

Name: Billy Smith

Are you representing: Yourself Organization

Organization (If Applicable): Fairfield City School District

Position/Title: Superintendent

Address: 4641 Bach Lane

City: Fairfield State: OH Zip: 45014

Best Contact Telephone: 513-623-1208 Email: smith_b@fairfieldcityschools.com

Do you wish to be added to the committee notice email distribution list? Yes No

Business before the committee

Legislation (Bill/Resolution Number): HB 67

Specific Issue: Please waive all state-required assessments, including state-required end-of-course exams.

Are you testifying as a: Proponent Opponent Interested Party

Will you have a written statement, visual aids, or other material to distribute? Yes No

(If yes, please send an electronic version of the documents, if possible, to the Chair's office prior to committee. You may also submit hard copies to the Chair's staff prior to committee.)

How much time will your testimony require? N/A

Please provide a brief statement on your position:

Please be advised that this form and any materials (written or otherwise) submitted or presented to this committee are records that may be requested by the public and may be published online.



Fairfield City Schools

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Chair Manning, Vice Chair Bird, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony as a proponent of House Bill (HB) 67. I am Billy Smith, Superintendent of the Fairfield City School District.

The Fairfield City School District proudly serves approximately 10,000 students in Butler County. With 11 schools in the city of Fairfield and Fairfield Township, we are very proud of our school district, our community and its people.

Throughout the COVID 19 pandemic, our school district has worked so hard to meet the needs of our students and families. Since March, 2020, we have provided thousands of lunches to our students. We recognized this as an immediate need as approximately 43% of our students qualify for free or reduced lunch. In addition, we have provided electronic devices to students who didn't have access to them. We have also provided students with wi-fi hotspots so that they could have access to the internet. Furthermore, our school district expedited our technology plan so that we could get devices into the hands of the majority of our students. As a result, we are now a 1:1 district for students in grades 3-12. These are just a few examples of how our school district has responded to the needs of our students and families during the pandemic.

As a school district, we are very proud of the way that we have responded to the needs of our students and families. To say that this school year has been a challenge would be an understatement. The Fairfield City School District began the school year in a hybrid model but switched to full time face-to-face learning after nine weeks. Since we made the transition to full time face-to-face learning, we have battled a large number of positive tests and quarantines for our staff members and students. Because of the large number of absences of students and staff members, teaching and learning has not been consistent. There is simply no substitute for in person learning for the majority of our students. Our students and staff members have made the very best of a very unique situation, and I commend them for doing so.

For the reasons I have mentioned above, I am asking that all state-required assessments be waived. This would include state-required end-of-course exams. It is my understanding that HB 67 does not prohibit schools from testing. If HB 67 is enacted, school can still choose to test. During the pandemic, local school districts were forced to make their own decisions about whether or not to open their schools. We were told that it was in the best interest of all stakeholders to give school districts local control when these very important decisions were made. I believe that the decision regarding state assessments should also be one that is given to local school districts. If local school districts are capable of making decisions about the opening of their buildings, I believe that they are also capable of making sound decisions regarding state assessments.

This request isn't about accountability. In our school district, we are still administering local assessments. We are using data from those assessments to impact instruction, intervention, and





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enrichment. Prior to Governor DeWine asking schools to create a plan to address learning gaps, our school district was already creating a plan. I suspect that other school districts are doing the same. We are public servants. We are here to serve our kids and prepare them for the future. Because of everything that has happened this year, I believe it is in the best interest of our students to waive all state-required assessments.

In closing, I want to thank Representatives Koehler and Bird for sponsoring the bill. I also want to thank you for the opportunity to offer written testimony in support of HB 67.

Sincerely,

Billy Smith

Superintendent

Fairfield City School District

