



## SHAKER HEIGHTS CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

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### TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 67

February 15, 2021

Chairwoman Manning, Vice Chairman 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 Dr. David Glasner, Superintendent of the Shaker Heights City School District.

The Shaker Heights City School District is a diverse suburban district of approximately 4,800 students immediately east of Cleveland. We are one of just eight school districts in North America to offer the prestigious International Baccalaureate Programme beginning in preschool and extending through 12th grade.

The Shaker Heights School District began the 2020-2021 school year in a fully remote model of education following the recommendations of the Cuyahoga Board of Health. As more information regarding COVID-19 protocols were released, our schools shifted to a hybrid instructional model for some students, while other families elected for district provided remote concurrent instruction for three weeks during the month of November. It was not until February 8, 2021 that all students who elected onsite instruction were able to attend their school on a daily basis. That said, 43% of our students are choosing to utilize the remote learning option during the pandemic. As we continue to focus on returning students to in-person instruction, the focus of this limited time needs to be on learning and the social emotional well being of our student instead of scheduling and proctoring state assessments.

Like most school districts throughout Ohio and the nation, Shaker Heights has faced the challenge of switching back and forth between and among onsite, online and hybrid learning models. Included in that challenge was ensuring that our teachers had adequate professional learning in the area of concurrent instruction, and ensuring that our students and staff had adequate technology to support remote instruction. Despite these challenges, most of our teachers, students and families have risen to occasion. However, concerns remain that some of our most vulnerable students have fallen further behind.

The passage of HB 67 is vitally important to the well being of all our students. The Ohio State Assessments do not permit remote assessments, so all students will be required to attend school in person to take the assessment, even if they have elected to receive instruction in a remote environment due to personal or family circumstances. Although flexibility has been previously granted with the Third

Grade Reading Guarantee, High School students are still required to take, and either pass or demonstrate competency on, the appropriate End of Course Exam for graduation.

Furthermore, the passage of HB 67 is an educational equity issue. In the Shaker Schools, 68% of our students who have chosen remote learning for health and safety reasons, but will be required to enter our buildings to take a required assessment, are students of color. Some 28% of those families qualify for free and reduced lunch. The elimination of required state testing for these families alone removes additional stress and anxiety on an already vulnerable population.

Additionally, I urge you both to consider adding increased graduation flexibility for the 2020-2021 school year, as seen in HB 197. These requirements are paramount to providing real-world solutions to graduate some of our most needy students. Shaker Heights High School students will have not experienced a “traditional” high school environment for a significant portion of their high school career. They have been forced to adapt to online instruction and remote learning, the loss of memorable in person experiences and, for some, the loss of loved ones due to COVID-19. The additional graduation flexibility is equivalent to the flexibility we received from our students throughout the pandemic.

Representative Koehler and Representative Bird, the Shaker Heights City Schools sends it deepest gratitude to you both for sponsoring this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer written testimony in support of HB 67.