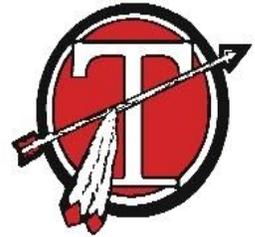


# Tecumseh Local Schools

9760 West National Road  
New Carlisle, Ohio 45344  
(937) 845-3576



*"Learning for all – whatever it takes"*

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

My name is Paula Crew and I am the Superintendent at Tecumseh Local Schools in Clark County. This is my twenty-eighth year working in the public school system. Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony regarding House Bill 67 today.

The students at Tecumseh Local Schools spent the first quarter of this school year via full virtual learning. We transitioned to a blended learning model for the second and third quarter, and we plan to return to full-time, in-person learning for all students on March 1st.

The return to full-time, in-person learning in our district and in many districts in Ohio, should not go hand-in-hand with the administration of state mandated testing. We need time to acclimate our students back to the school setting. The pandemic has created deficits in many areas for our students. The National Alliance on Mental Illness confirms "The Coronavirus (COVID - 19) has resulted in an unprecedented crisis that affects not only physical health and daily lives, but also mental health." (COVID-19 Resource Information Guide, <https://nami.org>). Statistics and data nationwide report the elevation of mental health issues, such as anxiety and depression during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Unfortunately, we have ample evidence within our own district that confirms the correlation between the elevation of mental health issues and the pandemic. Specifically, we have a startling elevation in the number of students experiencing depression, anxiety, self-injurious behaviors and suicidal thoughts and attempts. Our mental health cases have doubled since last year and will triple by the end of this year, based upon the number of current mental health referrals we have on our waiting list. We are experiencing multiple crises each week with multiple students from the elementary through the high school level. Why would we perpetuate issues further by making our students take tests that they are not prepared to take?

In conjunction with supporting our students' social, emotional and mental health needs, we must and will continue to focus on their academic growth throughout and after the pandemic. We know we have a difficult road ahead of us in education to eradicate the academic gaps realized as a result of the pandemic. Teachers do

not need state testing data to tell them this. Teachers and school districts already have formal and informal systems in place to identify and address the academic deficit areas. We will continue to use the data from our internal assessments to help our students where needed. This data is instantaneous, unlike state testing. Since the state testing data does not reach school districts until the following year, it will not serve as a tool to help our teachers this year. Furthermore, we are in the process of developing a learning recovery plan, as are many districts throughout Ohio. This will be a comprehensive learning recovery plan to address our student's academic gaps. Respectfully, let our teachers have time to teach our students, not use the time administering state testing.

Our students, educators and families have faced many challenges and barriers to learning this year. We have educated our students virtually with the lack of necessary devices. We had families sharing devices with a 4 to 1 child to device ratio until our devices eventually arrived, five months after they were ordered. We had families who either had no internet access or internet connectivity issues for the first part of the school year, until hot spots could be delivered. We have had students and staff members quarantined on a routine basis since we returned to blended learning, resulting in additional loss of instructional time. Our students have not had anywhere near a typical school year of instruction. They will not perform well on the state assessments. We know this, even before testing our students. Imagine you are the student returning to school after almost a year of inconsistencies in your education, and being required to sit and sustain a state assessment in which you are not prepared. Routine accountability is necessary in education; but not this year. This is not the year.

We need the remainder of the year to focus on supporting our students through the pandemic, not diverting time and energy on state testing. This precious time should be used in far more meaningful ways to support our students and educators. Let us have the needed time, with the little time we have remaining this school year, with our students. We need time to rebuild connections and relationships with our students. We need time to instill a sense of safety and security with our students. We need teaching time, not testing time. Insisting that our students take the state assessments this year would not be a decision based on what is best for our students. Thank you for your consideration on the passage of HB 67.

Respectfully submitted,

*Paula Crew*

Paula Crew

Superintendent