



The Ohio School Counselor Association

**The Ohio School Counselor Association
Proponent Testimony on HB 67
Sara Hoffman, President
February 16, 2021**

Chair Manning, Vice Chair Bird, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the House Primary & Secondary Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide the Ohio School Counselor Association (OSCA)'s perspective on House Bill 67, which would waive state tests for the current school year and instruct ODE to request a waiver for federal testing as well.

OSCA stands fully behind this measure not only for its necessity as a response to current pandemic learning circumstances, but also for its alignment with our position in support of testing reductions whenever possible and appropriate. School counselors see firsthand the toll test-taking places on students already struggling with challenging home circumstances, anxiety and full learning workloads. It is also worth noting that, in general, tests are not always a great measure of knowledge due to cultural biases that often impact the writing of the tests. Application of what is learned is much more important for students than regurgitating memorized facts.

But current circumstances bring added urgency and validation to the need to reduce testing; in this case, OSCA fully believes a waiver of state and federal testing is imperative. We stand strongly behind the comments bill sponsors made in the previous hearing that students', teachers' and staff's valuable and limited time would be much better spent attempting to get caught up on missed material than testing. End-of-course (EOC) testing administration specifically takes up many weeks of time and further disrupts content teaching. Without needing to administer EOCs, teachers and students could gain significant instructional time that could potentially make up for time lost over the past year. The Governor's proposed school year extension may not even be necessary if testing time is repurposed for dedicated learning.

And specifically with respect to our role in schools, testing requires hours upon hours of school counselors' time managing the process and tracking the results. Even in normal circumstances, this time commitment is not the best use of our master's degree level of expertise; but especially now, we should instead be focused on making sure we are meeting our students' escalating needs in our three domain areas: social/emotional, academic and career development. And with students' anxiety at unprecedented levels and mental health issues increasing due to extended time at home in sometimes adverse circumstances, adding high-stakes testing to the mix creates an additional source of anxiety that we predict will cause further mental health spirals and likely lead to lower performance on these tests.

School counselors are also finding that teachers increasingly need our support right now. Eliminating state and federal testing for this school year would alleviate stress for teachers already concerned about meeting standards and making up for achievement gaps. Without having to help with testing administration, school counselors could also be more supportive to teachers in our role.

OSCA believes there should be no concern around any alleged lack of student data due to testing waivers. We have trusted educators that are specialists in the content that they are teaching. OSCA believes that we should trust these licensed professionals to apply their knowledge and follow their standards in making necessary adjustments to teaching during these times. If this committee feels that diagnostic measurements are needed, schools could rely on other skills assessments like MAP or WorkKeys.

As a final note, OSCA also supports the proposed potential amendment to HB 67 that would extend flexibility initially provided in HB 164 of the last General Assembly to allow students to use a final course grade in lieu of an exam grade and create commonsense guidelines for correlated competency scores. We applaud the sponsors in general for being in tune to local school needs at this critical time and thank them for their willingness to bring forth this legislation.

Again, OSCA is fully in support of HB 67 and urges the committee to move the bill quickly. Thank you for your consideration of our perspective.