

HB 67
Ohio House Primary and Secondary Education Committee
February 16, 2021

Chairwoman Manning, Vice Chairman Bird, Ranking Member Robinson and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee, the members of the Greater Recovery And Dropout-Prevention Schools (GRADS) Coalition, which consists of Dropout Prevention and Recovery (DOPR) schools, would like to express their support for the provisions included in HB 67. This important legislation would provide much needed flexibility to schools and students during this unprecedented time.

Since Governor DeWine made the school closure announcement in March 2020, schools have done their best to adapt and adjust their operations in order to best serve their students. This has been especially true for DOPR schools, which serve Ohio's most vulnerable students. Often students enrolled in DOPR schools are older and face underlying health challenges or unique responsibilities such as family and work requirements. Providing the services and flexibility students have required during the pandemic has been a challenge, but one that the schools in the Coalition have met.

HB 67 extends some of the flexibilities surrounding testing during the pandemic that was first offered to schools by HB 197. Specifically, the GRADS Coalition supports the following provisions:

- 1) Waiving the requirement to administer state assessments for the 2020-2021 school year.
- 2) Extending the prohibition for an e-school from withdrawing students who were unable to complete assessments.

While we appreciate the sponsors' intent to keep the bill narrow in scope, we would ask that the committee consider language that would address the following:

- 1) Enable students to use their final grade in a class in lieu of an end-of-course exam to satisfy conditions of a high school diploma.
- 2) Extend the permission for schools to issue diplomas to a student on track to graduate for the 2020-2021 school year.
- 3) Expand protections against sanctions resulting from report card data.
- 4) Waive the participation thresholds tied to the NWEA MAP assessments for the 2020-2021 school year. ORC 3314.017 (C)(4) requires DOPR schools to administer an assessment measuring growth. This test was previously the NWEA MAP assessment; however, DOPR schools were just notified in January 2021 that ODE selected a new provider – Renaissance. The switch in providers has caused chaos for DOPR schools as they have been forced to learn how to administer an entirely new assessment, which is required to be completed in-person. Schools were given roughly two weeks notice before the start of the first testing window, which begins on February 16th. Making matters worse, ODE requires schools to have 75% student participation in the

test. In other words, DOPR schools are being asked to administer a test that they were just given by ODE. Furthermore, requiring students to take an in-person exam is impractical during the pandemic and will lead to nearly every DOPR school failing to meet the 75% participation threshold. Resolving this issue may not require a change in statute as the 75% participation requirement is a policy made within ODE and is not mandated in either the ORC or OAC.

Thank you for considering these comments. Once again, we support the flexibility provided in HB 67 and urge the committee to support the legislation.

GRADS Coalition

Buckeye Community School Coshocton Opportunity School Fairborn Digital Academy

Findlay Digital Academy Foxfire High School GOAL Digital Academy

Greater Ohio Virtual School Quaker Digital Academy

Townsend Community School TRECA Digital Academy