



Proponent Testimony Regarding HB 67
Chris Hanke, Superintendent of Garfield Heights City Schools
On behalf of the First Ring Schools Collaborative
Ohio House Primary & Secondary Education Committee

Chair Manning, Vice Chair Bird, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the House Primary & Secondary Education Committee: thank you for the opportunity to testify as a proponent of HB 67. My name is Christopher Hanke and I am the Superintendent of Garfield Heights City Schools.

Before accepting my current role, I served as Special Education Coordinator for our school district. I've spent a total of 20 years as a teacher, principal, and administrator. Garfield Heights is also a member of the [First Ring Schools Collaborative](#), a collective of 16 school districts which serve communities in and around Cleveland, Ohio. I am here today to speak on behalf of our professionals and students regarding the benefits of **allowing Ohio's public schools to focus on student learning and wellness by cancelling this year's state tests.**

Madam Chair, I know that you and many others present have extensive experience in the classroom. As you know, classroom instruction is at its most effective when teachers are able to plan instruction, gauge student understanding, and provide individualized support accordingly.

The elimination of the Spring 2021 tests will enhance teachers' ability to provide differentiated instruction to students whose gaps in learning have been exacerbated by the stress of the pandemic and all it has entailed. It is imperative that schools identify gaps that may have occurred in learning and address these individually with each student. The alternative – preparing students for a standardized test which does not directly correlate to received instruction – will not serve Ohio's students well.

Last week, Vice Chair Bird testified that state assessments assume a “standard of instruction.” **Using standardized instrument to assess each of Ohio's many school districts, which have employed dozens of diverse pandemic-responsive instructional methods, would not yield substantially useful data.** I agree with Vice Chair Bird and Representative Koehler that a standardized state test certainly will not yield data that correlates with pre-pandemic data, and it will not yield data that is substantially helpful to our efforts to bridge gaps in student learning.

Additionally, as many districts return to or expand in-person learning, I firmly believe that school leaders like myself, alongside the dedicated teachers we lead, need to focus on the social and emotional wellbeing of our students. Many of our students and families have been directly affected by COVID-19 through family members being sick and some passing away. The trauma of these events cannot be forgotten when policies are being considered – it impacts students profoundly.

Forcing schools to administer state tests this year will yield minimally useful data while robbing teachers of precious time which could be spent meeting individual students' needs.

Madam Chair, I thank you for the thought and consideration put into this bill, and I appreciate the opportunity to share my perspective and support for HB 67. I am happy to answer any questions.