

**House Education Primary and Secondary Education Committee**

**HB 67 – Proponent Written Testimony**

**February 18, 2021**

**Angela Savinda, High School Mathematics Teacher in Southeast Local School District**

Chair Manning, Ranking Member Robinson and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to provide proponent testimony in support of HB 67.

I do not need to tell you how different life is since COVID-19 began spreading in early 2020; you are living it too. However, I do wish to give you a peek into my life as an educator during this time. I teach at a Title I district in a rural community within Northeast Ohio, where approximately 40% of our student population is economically disadvantaged. Broadband internet access is not reliable for many of the students whose families are financially able to have such access. Our school district began the 2020-2021 school year on a hybrid schedule, which we have maintained except for a brief remote period prior to Winter Break. Due to the nature of the hybrid model, it is vital that students have reliable internet for their at-home days of instruction. To meet this need, our district used CARES funds to purchase wireless hotspots for those students who did not have internet access at home.

And just like magic, this fixed the issue. Except it didn't. While at home, many of our students have been responsible for the care of their younger siblings. It is not unusual for my students to join our Zoom class on their at-home days, with their younger siblings sitting on their laps or nearby. I share this information not for you to feel badly for these students, but to recognize their resilience during this time. Imagine you are a teenager who is spending half of your educational time learning from the comfort of your own home. Your gaming system and your comfortable couch are nearby and your siblings and pets are relying on you to care for them. With all of these distractions and responsibilities, you are also expected to complete work and/or attend classes virtually. Not all students can overcome these distractions, but an overwhelming amount of them do. Our students care about their education. They want social interaction with their peers and teachers, and they want to learn and better themselves.

As a teacher, I want to help my students reach these goals. However, the educational distractions are not present only in the students' homes. Our high school's mathematics curriculum is heavily focused on collaborative learning. Due to distancing requirements and students having to face the same direction, the only way that this group work can properly function is through virtual breakout rooms. So after their desks are wiped down with disinfectant, students sit down and set up their laptops for yet another virtual experience.

I share this story in hopes that you can see, although this school year is anything but normal, teachers and students are doing the best that they can for learning to occur. However, there are many things that we cannot control. We cannot control time lost due to learning new protocols and programs for online education. We cannot control time lost due to necessary cleaning and disinfecting. We cannot control time lost due to internet or technology errors. We cannot control time lost due to family responsibilities having to come before educational responsibilities.

While it may be true that you also cannot control that time lost, what you *can* control is future time being lost due to the administration of standardized tests. These tests are insignificant at the current time, as all schools and students have been affected differently and have run on different models. Instruction time, however, is more significant than ever. Teachers are the experts in our field and in our classrooms. We do not need a state test to determine the gaps in our students' learning or to plan how to meet the needs of our students. We need instructional time to do this. Thus I urge you to advocate for us to not lose more instructional time to state testing. Please support HB67 to waive student testing requirements for this school year and require the Ohio Department of Education to seek a waiver from federal testing requirements.

Thank you for your consideration. I am available to respond to any questions you may have.