



The OEA will lead the way for continuous improvement of public education while advocating for members and the learners they serve.

House Bill 67: Proponent Testimony
House Primary and Secondary Education Committee
Thursday, February 18, 2021

Chair Manning, Vice Chair Bird, Ranking Member Robinson and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jeff Wensing, Vice President of the Ohio Education Association. On behalf of our 121,000 members, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 67. I want to begin by thanking Representatives Koehler and Bird for sponsoring this legislation as well as Representatives Sobecki and Crossman for sponsoring HB 40. Legislation to waive state and federally required testing this school year is welcomed by educators, parents and students across the state.

OEA strongly supports this bill to forego state and federally mandated testing for this school year. The administration of standardized tests is logistically challenging and anxiety inducing under the best of circumstances. Of course, this year has been anything but the best of circumstances for our members and Ohio's students. Testing this year would not provide reliable data and would only serve to take away meaningful time from classroom instruction and meeting the needs of students.

House Bill 67 would waive state-mandated end-of-course exams and require the Ohio Department of Education to seek a waiver of federally required testing. Note that achievement tests administered in grades K-8 as well as one high school test in math, English language arts and science are federally required. The US Department of Education has yet to announce a testing waiver, but this may be forthcoming. Passage of HB 67 would make the intention of the General Assembly clear and put Ohio in the best position to secure a waiver.

As Representative Koehler noted in testimony last week, time is of the essence. Testing windows open in March, shortly after some of Ohio's students are returning to classrooms for the first time this year.

Passage of HB 67 is vital because of the need, this school year in particular, to give educators time to teach. Ohio's students have had their learning opportunities disrupted. In order to prioritize safety, it has been necessary for many districts to operate remotely or using a hybrid model. However, we know that time in the classroom is critical to student success.

Testing comes at a cost. I'm not talking about the cost to the state in terms of dollars (while that is considerable). There is an opportunity cost to testing. Time spent on testing means less time for teaching and learning. Less time for meeting the needs of students.



Pushing ahead with testing this year would consume school calendars and present all manner of logistical challenges. Representative Bird noted the “all hands on deck” aspect of testing and how that can be thrown into disarray by a quarantine or staff shortage. I’m deeply concerned about asking students to report for in-person testing where parents have chosen a remote learning option due to a child or family members medical condition.

Data from state achievement tests does not provide actionable information to teachers. Test results don’t come until the summer. Teachers are already doing the type of formative assessments that inform instruction to help students catch up. The state’s summative assessments are used in large part to generate state report cards and rank schools and districts against one another. While we appreciate action to limit the consequences tied to this data, I would argue that the time on generating it would be better spent on delivering curriculum and meeting students’ needs.

Lastly, I want to recognize the hard work and dedication of OEA members and all educators around the state. This has been a school year unlike any other. Educators have dealt with uncertainty, shifting delivery methods, fear and anxiety (both their students’ and their own). Throughout, they have delivered for their students. Many have risked their personal health and safety to do so. It has been nothing short of heroic. I urge you, when you are in your districts to make it a point to thank them for what they do. Another great way to thank them would be to pass this bill. I know it would be welcomed by educators throughout the state.

Chair Manning, this concludes my testimony. Thank you for your time and attention. Again, I urge quick passage of HB 67 and am available for your questions.