

House Education Primary and Secondary Education Committee

HB 67 – Proponent Written Testimony

February 18, 2021

Jacqueline Donley, ESL Teacher in Reynoldsburg City Schools

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.

It is hard to believe that almost a year has passed since March 12, 2020, when we sent our students home, hoping naively that all of us would be back in school in the next few weeks. While the whole experience still seems surreal for me, I know the impact the events of this past year have had on my adolescent students' sense of safety and stability is far greater.

While teachers have been working to reach and teach students under these circumstances, we know that the amount of progress made in this academic year is not comparable with a normal school year. Nothing about the past year has been "normal." We know our students are struggling, and it is beyond our control in most cases to alleviate our students' stress and ensure that they can focus on their goals as a student. As an educator, this fact is heartbreaking.

Now, as we approach March 2021, it feels like we are finally turning a corner with the pandemic, and we are so close to being able to welcome our students back into school. The idea that we would spend a minute, let alone weeks, administering state-mandated standardized tests once we finally have our students back in school is beyond reason to me. Administering these tests takes away from instruction and disrupts the normal flow of the school day and week, which is the opposite of what our kids need right now. Testing in the Spring will make it harder to recover any semblance of an academic routine with students for the two or three short months we have with them.

In addition to the disruptions testing presents, the results provided are not helpful for immediately informing instruction. Our district has reliable ways to assess a student's ability, their progress, and whether or not instruction is effective. Please allow those assessment measures to suffice for this year while we prioritize students' well-being and safe return to school. It is unconscionable to put *more* stress on our students and expect them to sit for high-stakes tests for the sake of more data.

We need to invite students back into classrooms with engaging, interactive learning activities and opportunities to socialize and process the rollercoaster of this past year. I beg the committee to act on this important issue and to let teachers' voices lead the way about decisions that impact K-12 students.

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

Sincerely,

Jacqueline Donley