

House Education Primary and Secondary Education Committee

HB 67 – Proponent Written Testimony

February 23, 2021

Chris Williams, Intervention Specialist- Columbus 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.

This year has been more challenging than any of my 6 years as an educator so far, and there's not even a close second. What has sustained me is the courage and resilience of my students and their families. My students all have profound orthopedic impairments or multiple disabilities, requiring constant attention and assistance in close proximity. Their families have sacrificed so much, often working from home while helping their child during the school day. One student in particular's mother has balanced working from home while assisting two young children with special needs. She has made sure her daughter has attended every session and completed every assignment. They have been nothing short of heroic the entire time.

As an Intervention Specialist, I am constantly gathering data to inform instruction. All of my students work off of specific, individualized education plans that best fit their learning needs. Testing, especially for my students, is often a large and time-consuming hurdle each year that doesn't inform our instruction like our data does. Testing during a pandemic is a grave injustice that should not be required.

I have students who have elected to remain in virtual instruction to prioritize their safety and well-being. We have students who have lost family members to Covid, making this decision understandable and inevitable. We are now asking these families to send their students in for testing, even though they have elected to stay home for their safety. This is unconscionable.

I am in strong support of HB67, which waives mandated testing for this Spring. When making decisions that impact all students, we must think of the most vulnerable and the impact it has on them. These are my students, and we must advocate for their health, safety, and well-being among all else.

Ms. Chairman, thank you for your consideration.