

February 19, 2021

Re: HB 40 and HB 67

Honorable Members of the House Education Committee
Ohio House of Representatives
State Capitol
1 Capitol Square
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Chairwoman Manning and Members:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comment as an interested party on HB 40 and HB 67. If passed, HB 40 and HB 67 maintain that Ohio schools and districts “shall not be required to administer the assessments prescribed in sections 3301.0710, 3301.0711, 3301.0712, 3313.903, and 3314.017 of the Revised Code.”

Section 3301.0712 speaks specifically to the ACT test as one of the two nationally standardized assessments that are used for college admissions and are administered to all Ohio juniors each spring. ACT scores have tremendous impact on students’ postsecondary opportunities and plans, and to take away this opportunity would be detrimental to all Ohio students and families. Removing it would create barriers to college access and eliminate scholarship opportunities, while increasing the tilt on an already uneven playing field for underserved students in particular, but for all current juniors impacted by COVID-19.

Unlike the other assessments discussed in the text of the bill, college entrance exams directly impact the postsecondary plans of Ohio students and families. These exams, as administered and paid for by the state, provide an in-school testing opportunity for every student in the state to have college-reportable scores. Ohio students send these scores directly to colleges and universities, not only for consideration for admission to the institution, but also to compete for millions of dollars in scholarship aid and for placement into first-year courses and competitive majors.

While many colleges and universities have changed their admissions requirements for fall 2020 and 2021, juniors testing in spring 2021 will be applying for admission for fall 2022. **The majority of universities throughout the nation and the state, including The Ohio State University – the top recipient of Ohio students’ scores – still requires a college entrance exam score for fall 2022 admissions and scholarships.**

Eliminating the opportunity for students to take the ACT in their school will have a disproportionate impact on traditionally underrepresented groups—minority and low-income students – who are typically less likely to be able to test on their own.

Without in-school testing, students and families would need to pay for and schedule Saturday testing, creating additional financial and logistical burdens during this already challenging time.

This would reinstate the large equity gap between students with the means, resources, and family support that statewide in-school testing has been able to remove. First-generation, low socioeconomic status, and racial or ethnic minority students are already at highest risk for college matriculation, enrollment, and graduation; removing the ACT testing opportunity would further disadvantage those with highest need.

As policy makers and educators prepare to address COVID-19 learning loss in 2021-22, ACT results could provide valuable insights – on the student, school, district, and state levels – as to the impact of the virus as well as provide a roadmap to help mitigate it. Data from the spring 2021 ACT could provide educators with consistent, diagnostic and prescriptive information as to what needs to be done in the senior year to help ensure student success, both during and after high school. This is particularly timely due to Governor DeWine’s recent call to have districts create plans to address coronavirus learning loss by April 1, 2021.

The ACT concisely measures the most critical, empirically-verified knowledge and skills needed for post high school success. Relying on a disparate district system of assessments would not provide the cross-state comparability that Ohio policymakers, educators, students, and parents require and deserve during this time. Using the ACT spring 2021 results to measure the impact of COVID needs to be separated from use of the results for accountability purposes. Moreover, **providing the ACT for the class of 2022 – the same opportunity as every class since 2018 – is a distinctly separate issue from which, if any, assessments are required for graduation for these students.**

We appreciate your consideration of these issues and want to assure you that we are committed to efforts to improve both equity and educational outcomes. We share Ohio’s vision of providing the next generation of students with an opportunity to accomplish their dreams through higher education.

Respectfully,

Mary LeFebvre
Director, State Government Relations

500 ACT Dr. | Iowa City, Iowa 52243-0168

500 ACT Drive | PO Box 168 | Iowa City, IA 52243-0168
319.337.1000 | www.act.org

