



**House Primary and Secondary Education Committee
HB 67 Proponent Testimony
Presented by Melissa Cropper,
President Ohio Federation of Teachers
February 22, 2021**

Chair Manning, Vice-Chair Bird, Ranking Member Robinson and Committee members. I am Melissa Cropper, President of the Ohio Federation of Teachers (OFT). OFT represents 20,000 teachers and paraprofessionals in rural and urban school districts, higher education faculty, and public employees. Thank you for this opportunity to testify on HB 67.

I want to start by thanking Rep. Koehler and Rep. Bird for introducing this legislation, as well as Rep. Sobecki and Rep. Crossman for introducing similar legislation. Our members truly appreciate your recognition of the concerns with administering mandated tests this school year.

This year has been an incredibly challenging year for educators and students alike. As you know from your own experiences and from the testimony of previous proponents, education has happened, and is still happening, in a variety of modes this year – from full remote to hybrid to full face-to-face. Even in the best circumstances though, learning has been disrupted due to quarantines, shifting modes of instruction, and illness.

As we enter into these final few months of school, we need to ask ourselves what we want the rest of the school year to be like, knowing that thousands of students will be entering the school buildings for the first time in almost a year, and the remainder of the students have had disrupted learning schedules, loss of social activities, and, for many, a great deal of stress due to conditions created by COVID. Do we want the bulk of the remainder of the school year spent on standardized testing and all the preparation and disruption that goes along with that, especially when we know those tests will not result in timely, useful information? Or would we rather spend the time engaging with our students, assessing progress on a daily basis, and doing remediation now in a timely manner. If we already know that we have students who have fallen behind, shouldn't we spend every minute we have working with them rather than spending hours giving standardized tests?

We all recognize the need to know how learning has been impacted this year. The fallacy some fall into is in assuming that a standardized test will give us that answer. The truth is that our teachers are the ones who can give you that answer. They have been with our students and have been assessing their progress all year. They can tell you who has fallen behind and who is on track. And no one worries more about the students who have not been engaged this year than the teachers who have been working hard to maintain connections with them.

Heather Stambaugh, a history teacher at Greenon schools, recently said in an interview, "Frequently, one of the greatest mistakes made is assuming testing and evaluations is the pinnacle of accountability for teachers. This is false. Our accountability looks us in the eyes every single day. Our accountability meets us at conferences. In a small town, it's educating the children of our friends and neighbors. Creating caring, thoughtful, critical thinkers is our accountability and it is what every teacher is still working towards, whether attending face to face, hybrid, or virtual." Heather has spent the year in on-going conversations with parents about how their children are doing based on the formative assessments she gives in real-time.

Tracy Radich, a fourth grade teacher in the Cleveland Public Schools also reported, "As a teacher, there are many ways that I can assess my students and plan accordingly to meet the needs of my students. My time needs to be dedicated to helping my students get back on track, helping my students succeed, and ensuring joy in that learning."

We know that the Federal government has not offered waivers as they did last year, but several states have applied for a waiver. We hope that this bill and other states' efforts to seek waivers will result in the U.S. Department of Education granting waivers.

In addition, we also support the amendment to the bill to include flexibility on graduation requirements.

Thank you, Chair Koehler, for moving this bill quickly. This concludes my testimony, and I welcome any questions you may have.