



*Coalition of Rural and Appalachian Schools  
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April 19, 2021

Chair Manning, Vice Chair Bird, Ranking Member Robinson and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of House Bill (HB) 200. My name is Dr. Richard Murray, and I am the Executive Director of the Coalition of Rural and Appalachian Schools (CORAS), which proudly represents 111 school rural systems in 23 Ohio counties. On behalf of the boys and girls in Ohio and these rural school systems, I am asking for the House's full support of HB 200.

For many years, lawmakers, educators, and business owners have debated the accuracy and legitimacy of the current school report card system. I think we are finally at the point where we all can agree that it needs to be fixed. The question is how to fix it, and I want to commend Representative Jones and Representative Robinson for the outstanding work their team has done in drafting HB 200 because it includes the much-needed positive changes to the current school report card system. Most of the 111 school districts that CORAS represents deal with issues of poverty. It takes time, effort, and resources to deal with this poverty. The current report card does not recognize these challenges. HB 200 takes steps forward in recognizing the challenges of poverty.

Specifically, HB 200 gives some flexibility in reporting growth or academic achievement for the gap closing measure. Kids do not come to us school-ready for a variety of reasons, many of which are beyond our control; therefore, it is important to recognize growth. No schools have been able to achieve the highest mark on the performance index rating since the inception of the report card. It makes no sense to leave a measure in place that is unattainable, and HB 200 makes adjustments to the performance index calculations. HB 200 allows schools to receive some credit for students who are slightly below proficient, which is many kids in our high-poverty schools.

Another example of how HB 200 addresses flaws in the current school report card system is by removing demotions. Some schools have many more subgroups than others and demotions are designed to be punitive. Student subgroups are already accounted for all over the report card. Counting certain groups of students repeatedly compared to others is unfair and designed to punish.

Perhaps the most important thing HB 200 does it eliminates the use of letter grades and an overall rating system. It replaces the letter grades with descriptions of level of expectations met and/or need of support. Ohio ought to be about supporting schools – not punishing them which is what the current school report card does. Further, do we really think that the differences in the thousands of schools across Ohio can be captured by one overall letter grade? I know of no other entity besides schools that we are doing this too. This unfairness has to stop.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this written testimony in support of HB 200.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Richard Murray".

Dr. Richard Murray  
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A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jerry Mowery".

Jerry Mowery  
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