

WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

Please complete the Witness Information Form before testifying:

Date: May 4, 2021
Name: Matthew T. Jablonski
Are you representing: Yourself Organization
Organization (If Applicable): _____
Position/Title: American History Teacher
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Do you wish to be added to the committee notice email distribution list? Yes No

Business before the committee

Legislation (Bill/Resolution Number): House Bill 73

Specific Issue: Testing Reduction

Are you testifying as a Proponent Opponent Interested Party

Will you have a written statement, visual aids, or other material to distribute? Yes No
(If yes, please send an electronic version of the documents, if possible, to the Chair's office prior to committee. You may also submit hard copies to the Chair's staff prior to committee.)

How much time will your testimony require? Written Testimony only

Please provide a brief statement on your position: House Bill 73, and the cause of testing reduction aligns with stakeholder input, the campaign promises of Governor DeWine, and the recommendations of the Superintendent's Advisory Commission on Testing (2017). Simply put, it is common sense education policy.

Please be advised that this form and any materials (written or otherwise) submitted or presented to this committee are records that may be requested by the public and may be published online.

Committee 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 as a proponent of House Bill 73, the latest iteration of the Testing Reduction Act.

As an American History teacher for over twenty years at Elyria High School, I believe, as do the majority of education stakeholders in Ohio, that standardized assessments administered in the state are excessive and intrusive, and their minimization is a long time coming.

While I am supportive of all of the major provisions of the bill, including those related to parent & student flexibility on the ACT or SAT, the elimination of potential retention in 3rd grade, and requiring districts to examine their own level of assessment, I would like to speak specifically to the combination of the American History and American Government assessments since this falls directly into my area of expertise.

First, it is important to note that a Social Studies assessment is not mandated by the federal government for high school students. With that said, Ohio's multiple assessments in Social Studies seem to have grown out of a concern among legislators regarding the teaching of the Historic Documents like the Federalist and Anti-Federalist Papers, the Northwest Ordinance, and the Bill of Rights and Constitution. According to state content standards, these documents are taught in their historic context in 8th grade American History: Settlement through 1870. They are required to be taught again, out of context, in 10th grade American History: 1870 through present. Finally, they are taught a third time, logically, in American Government. If the legislature or ODE had concerns regarding whether these were being taught, despite their overwhelming frequency in the content standards, an assessment is not the only recourse. Audits of district curriculum are a possibility, essentially requiring districts to prove their compliance. However, if an assessment were still deemed necessary, certainly a single, combined test in high school will do.

I have heard critics of test reduction lament the loss of data from these standardized tests. Others believe that without the tests, students will not take these courses seriously. First, any data that educators receive from ODE related to these assessments is negligible. It arrives after students have left the class, and even if the data arrived earlier, it is far less informative than data gained from summative and formative assessments being administered by professional educators in the field. As for the second concern... students do not take my American History class seriously because there is a state test attached to it. They take the course seriously because this is the environment in which the course is taught, because they are students who approach their work with consideration, and because I am a professional educator who brings to the classroom a sense of seriousness, relevance, and enthusiasm regarding the subject that I teach.

With these things in mind, again, a reasonable compromise between those with concerns regarding the Historic Documents or state test data, and those like myself who see no value in

the assessments is to minimize the high school requirement to a single Social Studies assessment.

This action would also make the Graduation Requirement more consistent. Beginning with the class of 2023, this year's sophomores, students have to score proficient on the Algebra and ELA II assessments, then earn two Graduation Seals. Among these is a Science Seal that requires a proficient score on the state's Biology Assessment. However, to earn the comparable Citizenship Seal a student must score proficient on the American History and American Government test. While making this Seal dependent upon scores on two assessments does not render it impossible, it would certainly lend logic and consistency to the framework if those assessments were combined.

If standardized tests were improving student achievement, there might be some logic in maintaining the current system, but they're not. There is absolutely no evidence that suggests that standardized assessments increase student achievement, college or career readiness, or any other positive outcome in a child's education. The modest steps taken to rein in standardized testing through House Bill 73, including the combination of the American History and American Government assessments, are reasonable and worthy of your support.

Thank you for your consideration of my thoughts on this subject, and the opportunity to provide testimony.

Matthew T. Jablonski
American History Teacher
Elyria, Ohio