



Brooklyn City Schools

9200 Biddulph Road • Brooklyn, Ohio 44144 • (216) 485-8100 • FAX: (216) 485-8118
www.brooklyn.k12.oh.us

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Senate Primary and Secondary Education committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide opponent testimony on Senate Bill (SB 145), which would make revisions to Ohio's School Report Card. I am Michelle Kalish-Cireddu, Assistant Superintendent of Brooklyn City Schools and a member of the Buckeye Association of School Administrators' report card committee.

Our report card workgroup has been focused on providing suggestions for reform to the current report card system to correct some unintended consequences and help tell more of a district's story. Currently, the report card relies predominantly on state assessment results to rank districts' performance. Our committee has worked to try and provide suggestions that would preserve accountability measures, but allow for a deeper understanding of districts' performance.

What is the purpose of a report card? The Ohio Department of Education website states: "Report Cards are designed to give parents, communities, educators and policymakers information about the performance of districts and schools — to celebrate success and identify areas for improvement." I agree with the department's statement. To accomplish this purpose, districts need a level playing field to be measured on the achievement and progress of their students and ensure that all students have access to comparable educational opportunities that allow for student growth and success. Currently, our local report cards do not meet this purpose. The current report card makes the assumption that all students come to school in August with the same tools and preparation for learning. When districts in poorer communities work to prepare their students for assessments, they face a greater challenge, as they are working to not only prepare students for the learning that their affluent neighborhoods are teaching, but also filling the gaps for students who do not have access to things like: preschool, someone to read to them at home, food on the table and access to proper healthcare. Students in poor and rural communities often have fewer opportunities, less experiences, greater daily challenges and therefore come less prepared for school. In my own district, as measured by the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment administered annually by all public districts, only about 30% of our incoming kindergarten students "Demonstrate Readiness" - this means they are entering kindergarten with sufficient skills, knowledge and ability to engage with kindergarten level materials. About 50% are "Approaching Readiness" - which means they need support to be able to engage with kindergarten material; and the remaining 20% are "Emerging Readiness", which means they need significant support to engage in kindergarten-level instruction. 70% of my youngest students need significant support to be able to access what my neighboring affluent districts' students can access with no support.

Sometimes, people need different treatment to make their opportunities the same as another's. **This is equity.** The current local report card is not a measure based in equity - it is a measure based in opportunity.

SB 145 requires student subgroups to meet both achievement **and** progress targets to meet Gap Closing standards, and that further creates an equity issue; some districts struggle to meet the achievement standard because of student backgrounds discussed above, but districts are growing the students academically. To call the achievement and progress measure “Equity” is a misuse of the term completely. Furthermore, there is no statistical validity to the use of n=15. All statistical research states sample sizes should consist of a minimum of 20 for reliability and 80 for validity. I was unable to locate any research to support an n size of 15.

Going back to the purpose of the report card, I believe that the report card should mirror the Ohio Strategic Plan for Success for Education. With that in mind, I struggle to understand how an overall letter grade or a star rating system provides any real information about how districts are growing students. The rating system proposed in SB145 does nothing more than to continue to rate the poorest school districts at the bottom. The work group developed by the House of Representatives developed recommendations for all of Ohio’s school families and school children to remediate this and provide measures and designations using six performance measures to replace the current letter grade system and I believe this aligns more closely with the purpose of Ohio’s Local Report Card, as described by the Ohio Department of Education.

The last area I would like to address is the Early Literacy measure. This measure has been discussed at length. This component continues to be confusing to parents and staff. There is indisputable evidence that early literacy is critical to K-12 success, particularly by the end of third grade. However, the K-3 Early Literacy component simply measures students who move from “off-track” to “on-track” and does not accurately represent the work districts are doing to close the reading gap for young learners. The component in the proposed bill continues to use the proficiency rate instead of the promotion rate on the Third Grade Reading Guarantee as the threshold for meeting the standard. If students meet the promotion rate, it means those students have evidenced they have the ability to move forward and continue growing. Why do we continue to penalize districts who meet the promotion rate, but have not yet met the proficiency level? Furthermore, the component fails to measure all students’ gains from kindergarten to third grade. Districts should be credited for growing all students, and therefore the measure should not focus on only those who were measured “off-track.”

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Senate Primary and Secondary Education committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide opponent testimony on Senate Bill (SB 145) today. I am glad to answer any questions you may have.