



Senate Education Committee
Senate Bill 168 Proponent Testimony
Buckeye Association of School Administrators
Ohio Association of School Business Officials
Ohio School Boards Association
Alliance for High Quality Education
Ohio Association of Secondary School Administrators

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today in support of Senate Bill (SB) 168. My name is Tom Perkins with the Buckeye Association of School Administrators. Joining me in answering your questions are Jennifer Hogue with the Ohio School Boards Association, Tony Podojil with the Alliance for High Quality Education, and Barbara Shaner, representing the Ohio Association of Secondary School Administrators. Katie Johnson with the Ohio Association of School Business Officials could not be here today but is in support of this testimony. Collectively, our organizations represent public school superintendents, school board members, treasurers/CFOs and other school business officials from around the state.

We want to thank Senator Reynolds for her efforts to provide schools with the educational reforms and regulatory flexibility that will allow them to operate more efficiently and provide better educational services to children. Many of the components of SB 168 are policies our members have often recommended, and we will focus our testimony on several of those key elements. Additionally, many of our members are in attendance today who will further discuss the impact the bill will have on their districts and students.

This is an incredibly consequential time for public schools and our students as we recover from the pandemic and prepare our students for a rapidly changing economy. To do that, we need high standards, but we also need to ensure our schools and school leaders have the flexibility to be innovative and meet the ever-evolving challenges and demands of a 21st-century economy. Just like businesses, schools also benefit by removing unnecessary and burdensome regulations while maintaining strong accountability measures.

Dyslexia

The dyslexia screening and services requirements are incredibly important and will have a positive and lasting impact on children. Our members have worked hard over the past two years to prepare and hire staff for this new initiative. Meanwhile, many districts have already been doing this work at a high level for years. SB 168 wisely acknowledges these advanced efforts by exempting districts from the requirement to screen students if they have already administered the dyslexia screener to their students.

The bill also restores the range of six-to-eighteen hours required for educators to undergo dyslexia-related professional development. By creating both a high floor and a high ceiling, the dyslexia work can continue to be implemented with fidelity while allowing for local districts to determine the necessary training time for staff.

OTES and OPES

For nearly a decade, Ohio's educators and administrators have been rated under the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES) and Ohio Principal Evaluation System (OPES), which are evaluative frameworks that use a variety of inputs to assess educators and administrators and drive improvements. These vitally important systems have implementation variability from district to district, and lawmakers have created improvements to systems since their inception. SB 168 builds on those prior efforts by permitting districts to pilot their own locally developed frameworks, while allowing them to still use the rigorous and vetted state frameworks under OTES and OPES. Doing so has the potential to spark unique and innovative outcomes that could become a new model for districts across the state.

High-performing district exemptions

Districts that achieve high marks on the state report card are currently eligible for exemptions from various state standards, including class sizes, teacher licensure, and teacher qualifications. It makes perfect sense to reduce regulations for our high-performing districts, and SB 168 does just that by allowing eligible districts to renew their exemptions and requiring they be notified of their eligibility status. We also encourage lawmakers to consider expanding the list of exemptions to allow those districts to work more efficiently and effectively.

Other important reforms

The bill makes many other important reforms, including allowing districts to provide high school courses outside the school day, rather than dictating a state-required supplemental contract to do so; removing a requirement for school boards to hold a separate hearing on their school calendar prior to the next hearing's vote; and allowing districts to determine staffing for nonteaching employees, a feature that already applies

to teachers.

One item we believe should be added to the bill is simplifying and streamlining the out-of-state reciprocity process for educators who are licensed in their state but wish to work in Ohio schools. This is an essential step to address the teacher shortage and help districts fill vacancies with experienced professionals from other states.

Taken together, we believe the provisions of SB 168 will reduce burdensome and unnecessary regulations, vest more decision-making back into local communities that know their students best, and better equip our school leaders to prepare our students for the future. We look forward to working with Senator Reynolds and this committee as the bill moves through the legislature.

Chairman Brenner and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for your time and attention. We urge you to support SB 168 and would be happy to address your questions.