Proponent Testimony on House Bill 145
House Education Committee

Thank you, Chair Fowler Arthur, Vice Chair Odioso, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the House Education Committee, for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 145.

My name is Chad Aldis, and I am the Vice President for Ohio Policy at the Thomas B. Fordham Institute. The Fordham Institute is an education-focused nonprofit that promotes educational excellence for every child in America via quality research, analysis, and commentary. We have offices in Columbus, Dayton, and Washington, D.C.

An Important Reminder

The COVID-19 pandemic made one thing undeniably clear: sustained, in-person instruction from a qualified teacher is irreplaceable. While educators and families made valiant efforts to adapt to remote and hybrid models, widespread learning loss across Ohio and the nation underscored how critical consistent classroom time is. Students thrive when they have routine access to great teachers and structured learning environments. Though House Bill 145 isn't a direct response to pandemic-related disruptions, it addresses one of the root issues: not enough time spent in school.

Time Matters, But So Does Its Use

House Bill 145 increases minimum instructional time by 27 hours for part-time kindergarten and 53 hours for full-day kindergarten through grade 12[1]. In so doing, it acknowledges what researchers have long known: time in school is a critical input for student learning. In that regard, the bill would represent a modest but important step forward in Ohio's commitment to academic recovery, improvement, and excellence.

However, it is not merely the quantity of time that matters, but its quality. A sweeping meta-analysis conducted by Kidron and Lindsay (2014) and summarized in a brief published by the Institute for Education Sciences found that increased learning time has mixed but generally positive effects, especially when the added time is delivered by certified teachers and structured through traditional, focused instruction. Programs using certified instructors and clear instructional goals had positive impacts on both literacy and math outcomes. Moreover, increased time had a particularly strong effect on students who were struggling academically.

More recently, Kraft and Novicoff (2025) writing in EdNext said, "we see a compelling body of evidence that increasing total school time leads to gains in academic achievement, on average. The most substantial impacts are at schools where longer days or years are part of wholesale reforms to maximize student engagement and instructional quality, such as turnaround or charter schools."

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[1] Ohio is in the middle of the pack compared to other states in terms of hours required: https://reports.ecs.org/comparisons/instructional-time-policies-2023

Simply lengthening the day or year without accompanying instructional reforms often produces limited or no gains. A Massachusetts study found no improvement in student performance after lengthening the school year. The additional hours were not explicitly tied to high-impact practices but instead were more loosely connected to teacher planning and enrichment opportunities, rather than direct student learning. A rigorous, more recent study from Florida (2018) found that requiring schools with the lowest reading scores in the state to extend their school year by 100 hours led to significant improvements (about a month of instruction) on state reading assessments.

Beyond Minimum Requirements

Establishing a higher floor for instructional time could be helpful, but it will likely only get us part of the way there. Chronic absenteeism has surged in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, with one in four Ohio students missing more than 10 percent of the school year. When students miss school regularly—whether due to health issues, transportation barriers, family instability, or school disengagement—even the most carefully constructed schedules cannot deliver academic benefits. In fact, students who have never been chronically absent are six times more likely to read on grade level by the end of third grade and nine times more likely to graduate from high school on time. To truly make the added instructional time meaningful, Ohio must continue to emphasize the importance of student attendance and maintain accurate and transparent tracking efforts.

In addition to student attendance, schools must address the equally critical issue of teacher availability. Staff shortages and the overuse of substitute teachers can significantly diminish the quality of instructional time, particularly in schools that already face resource constraints. Studies have shown that a great teacher can have a large positive impact on student learning, but teacher absences and shortages put that at risk. When a classroom lacks a consistent, qualified educator, students lose out on continuity, engagement, and effective instruction. Policymakers should consider strategies to reduce teacher absenteeism, invest in retention efforts, and build stronger pipelines for substitute teachers who are trained and prepared to support academic progress.

We need to remember that the potential benefit of a longer school year will only be realized if both students and their teachers are actually in school.

Ensure Consistent Standards Across All Public Schools

Currently, community schools (Ohio's public charter schools) are only required to provide 920 hours of instruction annually, a lower bar than what HB 145 proposes for district, STEM, and chartered nonpublic schools. Given that charter schools are publicly funded and serve some of Ohio's most underserved students, we would encourage you to apply the same expectations to them. Applying HB 145's standard to these schools would promote consistency and fairness while ensuring all students benefit from more classroom time.

Conclusion

House Bill 145 could help Ohio improve academic outcomes. We must remember though that quantity alone is not enough. For increased hours to have the maximum impact on students, they must be coupled with continued efforts to improve attendance, teacher availability, and instructional quality.

The Fordham Institute supports HB 145 and encourages thoughtful implementation to maximize its impact. Thank you for your time, and I'm happy to answer any questions that you may have.