

Senate Education Committee

Testimony on Senate Bill 19

Cassie Palsgrove | Director, K-12 Education Policy

Ohio Excels

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Chair Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the committee, my name is Cassandra Palsgrove. I am here today on behalf of Ohio Excels, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that engages and unites Ohio's business community on the full education-to-workforce pipeline, from early childhood, K-12, higher education, and into the workforce. On behalf of the business community, we convene coalitions, conduct research, work with schools and community partners, and advocate for solutions that improve educational outcomes for all Ohio students. I am grateful for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 19.

The Need for Mathematics Improvement

Ohio students' performance in mathematics has been a growing concern for years. Recent data reveals that 38 school buildings had zero students proficient in fifth grade math in the 2023-2024 school year. Math is a critical milestone for long-term academic success. The challenges don't end in elementary school—statewide data show declining math achievement rates in middle and high school, leaving too many students unprepared for the demands of postsecondary education and today's increasingly technical workforce.

The economic implications of this issue are clear: Ohio businesses consistently report challenges in hiring workers with the quantitative reasoning and problem-solving skills that today's jobs require. Without strong foundational math skills, our students face limited opportunities, and Ohio risks falling behind in a competitive global economy. We thank the chair for bringing this bill forward and shining a light on these important topics.

Support for Senate Bill 19

Senate Bill 19 begins to address this critical need by introducing early improvement plans, individualized intervention strategies, and necessary reporting requirements to ensure transparency and accountability. These steps represent a positive movement toward strengthening Ohio's education system.

The inclusion of both **mathematics achievement improvement plans** for districts and community schools, individualized **math improvement and monitoring plans** for struggling students, and the inclusion of high-dosage

tutoring, reflects evidence-based practices that can meaningfully improve outcomes. Additionally, the emphasis on involving families, teachers, and administrators in these efforts ensures a collaborative approach to student success. Reporting math curricula will also be essential to understanding which materials are the most effective in Ohio for raising math achievement.

Recommendations for Inclusion

While Ohio Excels is very supportive of this bill, we have also been working with stakeholder groups including the Alliance for High Quality Education, Fordham, and others, to examine policy solutions that foster math achievement, and urge the committee to consider the following additional provisions:

1. **Comprehensive Math Placement Plans** – One way to foster high achievement in math is to ensure students are immersed in content that reflects and stretches their math skills. We would recommend all schools adopt Comprehensive Math Placement plans for students beginning in 5th grade that lay out the key identifiers and milestones to prepare students for success in Algebra 1.
2. **8th Grade Algebra 1 Enrollment** – Research shows that completing Algebra 1 by 8th grade predicts long-term success.¹ However, many academically ready students do not have this opportunity. We have about 10,000 to 12,000 annually students statewide who are high performing and ready to advance in their math pathway but are not enrolled in Algebra I by 8th grade. We recommend enrolling all prepared students in Algebra 1 by 8th grade and allowing families to opt out if desired. The head start provided by this proposal would give students more time in high school to pursue advanced math coursework aligned to their postsecondary plans, such as statistics, career-technical education courses, and computer science.
3. **Minimum Math Sub Scores for Teacher Licensure** – It's critical that all teachers who are expected to teach math concepts to students are themselves proficient in that content. A sub score for math on the elementary licensure exams will help enforce this important concept and ensure colleges of education who are preparing teachers have a goal post in mind. In this recommendation, teacher candidates that do not reach a minimum math score can still get a license, but they cannot lead math instruction. Recent changes to teacher licensure bands may effectively make this change in their revisions.

Conclusion

Senate Bill 19 is a vital step toward addressing Ohio's mathematics challenges in preparing our students for the future. By implementing the recommendations outlined above, we can ensure this legislation has the strongest possible impact on our education system, our workforce, and our economy.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to Ohio's students. I am happy to answer any questions the committee may have.

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<https://research.hks.harvard.edu/publications/getFile.aspx?Id=1238#:~:text=Efforts%20to%20increase%20the%20amount,counselor%2C%20their%20parents%20and%20themselves>