

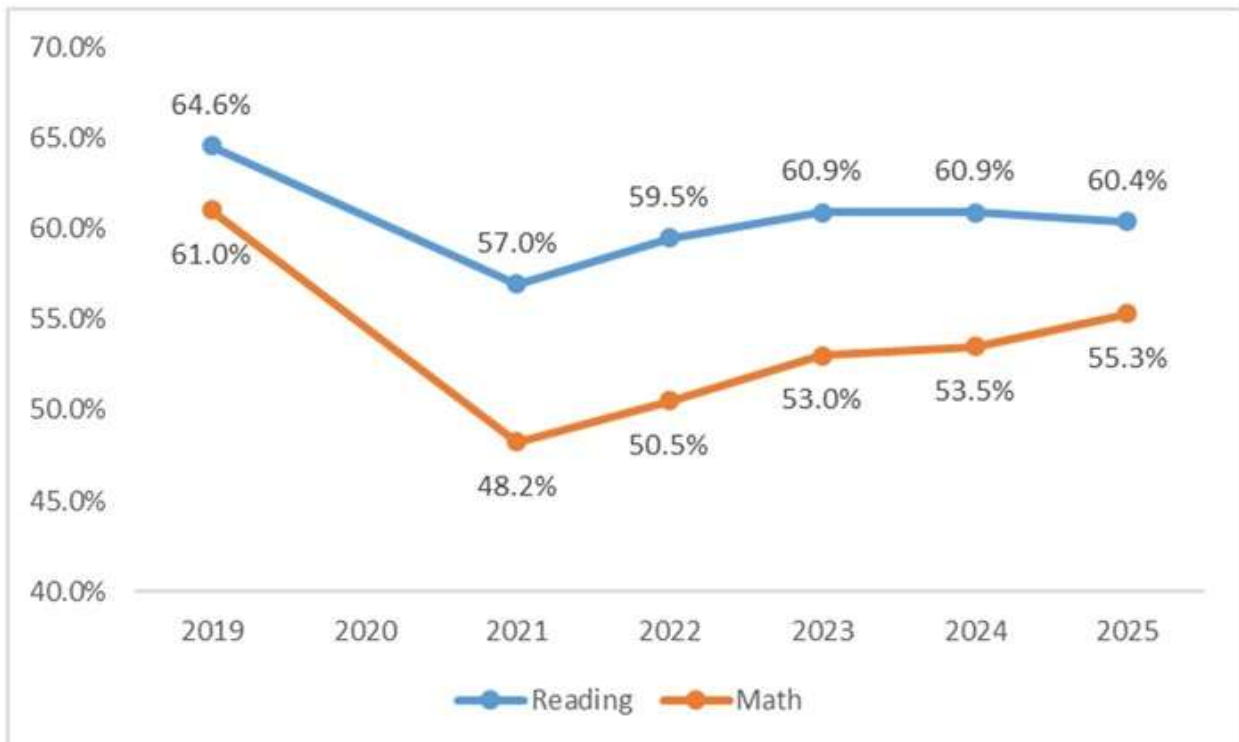
Chair Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of Senate Bill 19. My name is Chad Aldis, and I serve as Vice President for Ohio Policy at the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, a nonprofit education policy think tank committed to rigorous research and promoting high expectations for all students.

At the outset, I want to thank Chair Brenner for his tireless leadership in confronting what can only be described as Ohio’s math crisis. His focus on numeracy—an area too often overshadowed by reading policy—reflects a deep understanding that a strong foundation in mathematics is essential to both our students’ and our state’s future.

### The Scope of Ohio’s Math Challenge

Despite recent academic gains, Ohio remains well below pre-pandemic achievement in both reading and math. As Fordham’s recent analyses show, math proficiency remains 5.7 percentage points below 2019 levels, with only 55.3% of students proficient (on grade level) statewide.

**Statewide proficiency rates in math and reading, 2018–19 (pre-pandemic) to 2024–25**



These gaps aren't just academic—they're economic. Employers consistently cite quantitative reasoning and problem-solving as top skills for the modern workforce. Whether a student aspires to be a nurse, electrician, or software developer, math is a gatekeeper to opportunity. Without stronger math achievement, Ohio risks leaving a generation of students—and the state's economic future—behind.

### **How Senate Bill 19 Addresses the Crisis**

Senate Bill 19 takes a systematic, evidence-based approach to improving math outcomes that—if implemented robustly—has the potential to boost math achievement. It includes:

#### **1. Academic Intervention and Monitoring**

The bill requires schools to identify and support students scoring “limited” in math or English language arts, providing evidence-based interventions at no cost. This includes high-dosage tutoring, extended learning time, and other targeted supports.

#### **2. Math Improvement Plans for Students and Districts**

Beginning in the 2026–27 school year, each struggling student must receive a Math Improvement and Monitoring Plan, developed collaboratively with parents and teachers. Additionally, districts where fewer than 51% of students score proficient on the third-grade math assessment must create a Math Achievement Improvement Plan, ensuring leadership-level accountability and strategic intervention.

#### **3. Statewide Oversight and Transparency**

SB 19 strengthens state oversight by requiring the Department of Education and Workforce (DEW) to audit 5 percent of schools annually, reviewing the quality and fidelity of intervention programs. These findings will appear on public report cards—providing families and taxpayers with greater transparency.

#### **4. High-Quality Math Curriculum and Instructional Materials**

In one of the bill's most significant provisions, DEW will review core math curricula and publish a list of high-quality, standards-aligned instructional materials by April 2026. Schools' use of these materials will be publicly reported on state report cards.

#### **5. Strengthening the Teaching Profession**

SB 19 recognizes that great instruction begins with great teachers. It calls for new math proficiency assessments for early-grade teacher candidates and state-developed professional development programs focused on evidence-based math instruction. These steps ensure educators have both the content knowledge and tools to deliver high-quality math lessons.

#### **6. Opportunities for Advanced Learners**

Finally, the bill opens new doors for high-achieving students by requiring that students who score accomplished or advanced in math on the state assessment be automatically placed in accelerated or Algebra I courses, with a parental opt-out. This provision ensures that excellence is nurtured, not neglected—a crucial step in closing both the lower and upper ends of Ohio's achievement gaps.

### **Why This Matters: Ohio's Path Forward**

Ohio has taken strides to improve literacy through the *Science of Reading* reforms. But as Fordham has repeatedly emphasized, we must now apply that same urgency to math. The bill reflects a clear understanding that strong math achievement is not optional in today's economy. It is the foundation for innovation, progress, and workforce readiness. Students who can think mathematically will not only succeed in college but also thrive in trades, technology, and countless real-world applications.

### **Conclusion**

In short, Senate Bill 19 is both timely and essential. It creates a coherent, statewide strategy for improving math outcomes—built on evidence, transparency, and accountability. Most importantly, it affirms that every Ohio student, regardless of ZIP code, deserves access to rigorous math instruction and the opportunity to succeed.

Chair Brenner and members of the Committee, thank you for your leadership in confronting this urgent challenge. The Fordham Institute strongly supports Senate Bill 19, and we urge its swift passage.