

HB176 - Proponent testimony

May 31, 2017

Paul S. Mittermeier, graduate student Hillsdale College

Good afternoon Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair Slaby, Ranking Member Fedor and members of the House Education and Career Readiness Committee,

I come before you today to testify on behalf of House Bill 176, which affords the children of Ohio (as well as their parents, educators, administrators, and other advocates) a unique and long-overdue respite from the infringements upon the quality and access of their learning and the violations of their privacy that have proliferated in the draconian, high-stakes, post-Race to the Top educational landscape. The citizens of our state have demonstrated without equivocation their disdain for the top-down, centrally-planned educational framework that was hoisted upon them seven years ago without consent or transparency, and that effectively placed children and teachers alike at the disposal of the state through the disaggregated mining of personally-identifiable student data, the hawkish raising of teacher evaluation stakes, the adoption of the highly-contested Common Core Standards, and the partnering with affiliated, crony testing consortia. The rejection of this framework, which is evident in the significant number of children who opted-out of state testing and which prompted me, a student, to engage hundreds of concerned Ohioans by hosting informative presentations concerning the effects of Race to the Top, could not be clearer in the direction that it is now taking; citizens such as those gathered here today demand not another top-down, state-led, central plan, but true *local control* that liberates them from the overreach of both Washington and Columbus. Legislators should not operate under the misconception that a mere shift in governing party at the state and/or federal levels and the codification of that party's own central plan will result in quality learning and ease of access; rather, they should recognize that concerned citizens desire an abatement of *any and all* bureaucratic dictation, which is necessarily alienated from and incapable of knowing the complexities and perpetually-changing student needs that can be known and provided for at the local level. This local control and the minimization of Washington's and Columbus' impacts upon the lives of students can be achieved by way of House Bill 176, which removes the Common Core mandate and empowers districts and/or institutions to determine their own competitive standards, eases burdensome testing requirements and evaluations, and secures the data that can presently be shared by the Department of Education with any entity deemed appropriate.

Notwithstanding assertions that, "Common Core has been done away with," and that, local control already exists because, allegedly, the standards, "are no longer present in Ohio," parents and educators know that the standards and the invasive Race to the Top requirements that facilitated their adoption are very much at work in the Buckeye State. They are also aware that, contrary to popular narrative, local control and flexibility are not manifest in the Every Student Succeeds Act, which empowers the Education Secretary to veto any standards that she deems not sufficiently "college-and-career-ready," plausibly requires Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act alignment, and states that, "State accountability systems [of which I have been

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speaking with regard to Race to the Top] be structured as per the federal bill.” None of this is local control, and none of this reflects the wishes of parents who are rightfully clamoring for restored jurisdiction of the education of their own children. It is for this reason and for the protection of children, educators, and parents, none of whom deserve to be treated as test subjects or case studies in the state’s grand, standards-based reform experiment, that we demand lasting and meaningful local control as secured by House Bill 176. We thank you for your attention and for your efforts to pass this common-sense initiative on for vote in the General Assembly.

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair Slaby, Ranking Member Fedor and members of the House Education and Career Readiness Committee, I thank you for your attention, and the opportunity to speak in support of HB176. I will do my best to answer any questions you may have.