

In Support of House Bill 176 - 132nd General Assembly

May 31, 2017

Chairman Brenner and Education Committee members-

My name is Chris Moll. I live in Waynesburg, OH and I am the parent of 4 school age children. This fall they will be in kindergarten, 4th, 5th and 7th grades. I am representing myself and the Sandy Valley Elementary Parent Teacher Association.

We support House Bill 176 for several reasons. We are in favor of:

- elimination of the 4th and 6th Grade Social Studies Assessment
- elimination of the Fall 3rd Grade English Language Arts Assessment
- prohibition of Common Core or similar programs as the state's academic content standards
- restoring local control to school districts in the areas of academic standards, teacher evaluations, elementary-level assessments, and K-3 diagnostic assessments
- safeguarding student's personally identifiable data

I am the current President of the Sandy Valley Elementary PTO and have held this position for the past 3 years. I have many duties including fundraising, scheduling assemblies and events, and sponsoring field trips. During this time, it has gotten increasingly frustrating trying to schedule anything. The overly rigorous testing schedule is primarily to blame. In our school, we do not schedule anything in March, April or the beginning of May. Especially during this time, there is always some sort of testing going on. Our PTO has offered to pay for field trips but many times they don't happen because they are too busy testing or

preparing for tests. Two years ago, our 5th grade was unable to take their annual trip to COSI, because they couldn't fit the trip in with their testing schedule. These kids look forward to that trip from the time they enter school, and for many of the kids in our district, it may be the only time they set foot in a museum of any sort. It is disappointing that standardized tests and assessments are taking precedence over educational field trips. House Bill 176 will reduce the amount of time students spend testing and we support this.

Additionally, technology labs are being bogged down not only with the number and frequency of tests, but with countless hours of time dedicated to practicing for the tests. Students have to learn how to log in, navigate the tests and enter information. This is taking valuable technology time away from our students who desperately need computer skills. Yet they are expected to be more than proficient in these skills to successfully complete the tests.

By far, the biggest issue parents in our school have are with Common Core and the stresses of over testing. Parents share stories of their children vomiting before the AIR tests because they are so nervous. My own daughter was in tears for a week before the Spring 3rd Grade Language Arts Assessment - and she had already tested above proficient in the fall. However, she felt the pressure of needing to show growth and she was aware that the test results reflected on her teacher. Imagine the stress felt by the kids that had not passed it in the fall. And these are 8 year olds! There is no reason these children should have that much pressure put upon them. We support House Bill 176 because it will eliminate the Fall 3rd Grade Language Arts Assessment, thus reducing the amount of stress placed on our students.

The Common Core standards are equally stressful. As parents, how can we be expected to help our kids with homework when we have no clue how to do it. We lack resources at home to guide us. We should not have to look for resources online to help our kids with something as basic as 1st grade math. And if you have ever read a 3rd Grade Language Arts practice test you know how incredibly confusing they are. How are we supposed to reassure our kids that they will do fine on the test for the 3rd Grade Reading Guarantee when parents,

many of us college educated, can't even figure out the right answers for the practice tests? In addition, it should not require weeks and weeks of practice tests in school and as homework, to prepare students to take the actual test. We support the prohibition of PARCC and other related Common Core assessments. We also believe our local Board's of Education are best suited to decide what curriculum is best for our students.

We support returning local control to school districts to implement teacher evaluations. The current evaluation system and its use of standardized assessments as a means to evaluate teachers is creating the completely wrong outcome. Schools and teachers are using a rewards based approach to achieve a desired outcome. And it's not working. But who can blame these teachers? Their jobs depend on test results. Students recognize the tests that are "high stakes" and which ones don't matter as much. And therefore, the pressure to perform well on these tests is exponentially higher. There are signs of encouragement hung around the school for these tests, the kids get bottled water during the test, parents write encouraging notes to be opened on test day, and there are incentives and giveaways for participation. It is truly ridiculous. No wonder kids are so stressed! The intrinsic reward of a job well done and the process of working hard for a desired result is being replaced by a what's-in-it-for-me mentality.

In our school, students were able to earn tickets for different criteria pertaining to taking a test. For example, if they spent a certain amount of time doing a test, they got tickets. At the end of the testing period, if they "earned" enough tickets they would get a movie and popcorn or something similar. During a 4th grade assessment, my son was able to finish the test quickly, but because he didn't continue to work on it for the length of time that was determined necessary, he didn't receive enough tickets to watch the movie. So he had to remain "in task" while the other kids, regardless of how well they did on the test, got to watch the movie. So, the next test period, my son did the test slowly, so he would take enough time to earn the tickets. And what do you suppose happened? He went so slow that he didn't finish the test - but he used up all the time so he got to watch the movie. The test certainly wasn't indicative of his

competency and it certainly wasn't the outcome the teacher desired. My son learned how to play the game and in the end all the incentives did the opposite of what they were intended to do. Similarly, when a PTO member's 7 year old daughter heard an iPad was being offered as a testing incentive , she promptly stated "I already have an iPad so why do I care how well I do on the test".

No test or assessment can determine the quality and capability of a teacher. And they certainly should not be worth 50% of a teachers evaluation. Teachers and students are unduly stressed by this and it is not generating desired results. Teacher evaluations should be conducted by local Board of Educations and administrations. They know their teachers better than anybody and they know what their students need from their teachers. House Bill 176 aims to return teacher evaluations back to local discretion and we support that.

We also support the elimination of required diagnostic assessments for Kindergarten through 3rd grade students. Our children are being tested too often as it is. We believe that school districts and schools should be allowed to authorize these assessments if and when they see fit. We also support the protection of our students data and insist that we be notified, and then consent, if we agree to have their data shared.

Finally, we believe that our elected Board of Education members and local governments are the best equipped people to determine how our students receive their education. We respectfully ask that you support House Bill 176 and restore high quality, meaningful education to the children of Ohio.

Respectfully,

Chris Moll and the Sandy Valley Elementary PTO