



Thank you, Chair Brenner, Vice Chair Slaby, Ranking Member Fedor and House Education Committee members for giving me the opportunity today to provide testimony in opposition to House Bill 176.

My name is Chad Aldis, and I am the Vice President for Ohio Policy and Advocacy at the Thomas B. Fordham Institute. The Fordham Institute is an education-focused nonprofit that conducts research, analysis, and policy advocacy with offices in Columbus, Dayton, and Washington, D.C.

We've long believed that high standards, rigorous assessments, and a strong accountability system are key components in a quality educational system. For the most part, Ohio excels in each of those areas. The legislature and this committee in particular deserves much of the credit for that and ensuring that every student in our state has the opportunity to receive an excellent education.

House Bill 176, as introduced, would severely weaken Ohio's education infrastructure. Here's how:

### **Replacing the current standards**

HB 176 prohibits the use of the Common Core standards. Because Ohio's math and English language arts standards were based upon the Common Core, this bill would require the state to adopt a new set of academic standards. This is despite the state having recently completed an extensive revision process—led by local teachers and open to public feedback—that made the standards Ohio-specific. It also ignores the fact that Ohio districts, schools, and educators have been working with these standards for years, starting all the way back in 2011. While a few education leaders may testify for changing the standards, most are likely to argue for consistency and to be left alone to carry on with their job of educating Ohio students.

Even worse, the bill seeks to replace our current, Ohio-specific standards with standards from another state: Massachusetts's pre-2010 standards. This move suggests a belief that by adopting the Bay State's old standards, Ohio will place itself on the road to dominating the education sphere just as Massachusetts routinely does. Unfortunately, that's not likely to happen. Why? It's true that Massachusetts had very good standards, but its success didn't happen solely because of its standards. A host of other policies and reforms shaped it into an education powerhouse. These policies included implementing challenging criterion-referenced tests, rigorous graduation requirements (two policies eliminated by this bill), teacher licensure reform, and school funding related changes.

There's nothing wrong with Ohio policymakers wanting to model the Buckeye State's K-12 sector on that of Massachusetts. But this bill does not accomplish that. Instead, it takes advantage of Massachusetts's reputation when it comes to standards while veering far afield from the reforms many experts suggest propelled the state's stellar performance.

### **Requiring new assessments**

Another significant problem with HB 176 is that it would require the state to adopt an entirely new system of assessments—assessments that were used in Iowa prior to 2010. The first problem with this is that these assessments aren't aligned to the bill's proposed standards from Massachusetts—meaning Ohio would administer assessments that aren't aligned to the standards its teachers would be teaching and students would be learning.

The second problem is that those assessments are norm-referenced. A norm-referenced test determines scores by comparing a student's performance to the entire pool of test takers. Each student's test score is compared to other students in order to determine their percentile ranking in the distribution of test takers. A criterion-referenced test, on the other hand, is scored on an absolute scale. Instead of being compared to other students, students are compared against a standard of achievement (i.e., a "proficiency cut score"). Ohio has long used criterion-referenced assessments because they give every student the opportunity to do well and can better gauge what students know.

In education, there's room (and a need) for both of these types of tests. Do we really want the scores of these tests to be based on what other students know, instead what our students *should* know? Comparing students is useful, but it doesn't offer a complete picture. Think of it this way: you could be the richest person in your city, but that doesn't mean you have enough money to pay your bills. It's a cold comfort to know that you're better off than your neighbors if you still can't buy groceries and pay your electric bill.

#### **Other changes of note**

Model Curricula—the bill prohibits ODE from developing model curricula. Ohio law already leaves it up to districts as to whether "to utilize all or any part" of the model curriculum, so there's no reason to abolish it. Doing so would make implementation much harder for districts as they wouldn't have anything to build upon

Graduation Requirements—the bill eliminates the requirement for a student to complete a graduation pathway to receive a diploma. It's fair to debate whether we've gotten it exactly right with our current graduation requirements, but getting rid of any requirement is a different matter altogether. At a time when thousands of jobs are sitting vacant because there aren't enough qualified applicants, more and more young people can't meet the military's enlistment requirements, and too few Ohio graduates are prepared to take college level courses without remediation, can we really say no requirements for graduation is in the best interest of our young people?

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Overall, House Bill 176 makes a number of changes that will weaken the state's educational system. The proposed changes to standards and assessments are particularly worrisome. Calling for yet another set of standards will force schools, educators, and students into another period of transition and turmoil. Meanwhile, requiring the state to utilize norm-referenced assessments will rob Ohio families of the

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ability to discern whether their students are truly college and career ready. For these reasons, we stand in opposition of House Bill 176. I'm happy to answer any questions that you may have.