

Hello, my name is Paul Palomba. I am president of the Canton Professional Educators' Association. On May 29th I testified before this body on behalf of the community stakeholders of Canton Ohio in regard to the merits of House Bill 154. I am here today to express these same sentiments and to support House Bill 166 as well as the Senate sub bill from Tuesday, June 11th. At the same time, I, and those I represent, vehemently oppose the Senate Education Committee Amendment which, essentially, is still an Academic Distress Commission that has the same components of the state's heavy hand that has notoriously divided communities.

The major concern is that high stakes decisions are being made on the basis of arbitrary cut scores, cut scores which indicate the rigor of assessments have exceeded realistic targets for growth. In Canton City Schools there were some disappointing passage rates on state tests. Similarly, schools district that would be described as suburban or rural have also experienced lower scores than what they are accustomed to receiving. This is not just an urban school district problem.

For example, across Ohio, the average scale score for geometry was 697, while in Canton City it was 669. The difference between these averages is 28 points, or roughly the difference of 3 to 4 correct answers. Moreover, across the entire state of Ohio, only 44% of students were deemed proficient in Geometry. On the American Government test, statewide, the average scale score was 714. In Canton City it was 700, a difference of 14 points, literally the difference of one or two questions. While the average scale scores of 714 yielded a proficiency rate of 76% across the state, Canton's average score of 700, again a difference of one or two correct questions, yielded only a 47% passage rate.

A startling statistic for this year's state tests reveal only 53% of high school students in Ohio were proficient in Algebra 1, and, as previously mentioned, only 44% statewide were proficient in Geometry. Furthermore, only 60% of students, statewide, were proficient in Language Arts 1 and 2, respectively. Regardless of the state test that was given, Canton City, and other districts, urban, suburban, and rural, are merely separated from proficiency by 1 to 4 correct test responses.

Considering the obstacles of poverty, trauma, language barriers, and students with special needs, are we really that far behind the rest of the state? Is a proficiency deficit of 1 to 4 questions an obstacle to the Senate Education Committee's recognition of the House passed version of 166 and the Senate sub-bill, which give the scope and framework to close this small gap, making improvements with a focus on local control?

We consider the Senate Education Committee amendments to contain the same tenets of existing Academic Distress Commissions. Those tenets have torn apart the communities of East Cleveland, Lorain, and Youngstown at the expense of local communities while no statistical improvements have been made.