



**Ohio 8 Coalition Proponent Testimony
Ohio Senate Education Committee
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Julie Sellers, President, Cincinnati Federation of Teachers
Ohio 8 Coalition Co-Chairs
September 2, 2020**

Chairperson Lehner, Vice-Chairperson Brenner, Ranking Member Fedor, and the members of the Senate Education Committee.

On behalf of the Ohio 8 Coalition, We appreciate the opportunity to share with you our testimony on Senate Bill 358. The Ohio 8 Coalition districts serve nearly 200,000 students across Ohio. We hope that our testimony today will encourage you to leverage the knowledge and expertise of our Coalition to ensure there is meaningful change to policy that impacts our students, teachers, and administrators. In that vein The Ohio 8 Coalition supports SB 358 and urges its quick passage through the General Assembly.

We thank Senators Manning and Fedor for bringing this legislation forward and we support this bill based on the following.

1) Purpose: The purpose of standardized testing is meant to assess and track a student's progress and performance. These data are then used by teachers and administrators to inform instruction and to compare that student to his or her peers, at the local and state level. The results are based on the assumption that you can deliver the content being covered by the test in an equitable manner. And in this case equity is related to access to the content through modified or limited instructional time. As you may know, approximately half of Ohio school districts have established virtual or hybrid school settings to start the 2020-2021 school year. The balance are in person. Based on the status of COVID-19 in a community, the setting may change and even shift among virtual, hybrid, and in person throughout the school year. These differences do not allow equitable access to the course content and/or instructional time as some students may be able to access their teachers hours a day vs. hours a week. This curbs the usefulness of those data to inform instruction and limits an accurate assessment of that student's progress and performance and as well as the comparison of that progress and performance among peers.

2) Accountability: If access to course content is not equitable for the reasons outlined above, then maintaining accountability system sanctions related to that course content through the 2021-2022 school year does not make sense. In particular, Ohio should pause

all sanctions related to state report card ratings, Ed Choice scholarships, Academic Distress Commission determinations, and the use of value added in teacher evaluations. Our Coalition has stated many times before that accountability is critical but the system that drives that accountability must be fair and equitable. The Ohio 8 Coalition believes that considering the times we are all facing, these temporary changes offer the flexibility that is needed for school district administrators, teachers, and staff to focus on ensuring access to content, instruction of that content, and remediation (where needed) rather than state testing.

Even with a temporary pause on these sanctions, as a matter of daily routine, school districts, administrators and teachers track and understand the needs and progress of students. In other words, the focus of our practitioners has and always will be to ensure our students grow and achieve in a manner that aligns with their specific needs and ability, even within the context of and challenges related to COVID-19.

It should be noted that for many of the same reasons we outline in our testimony, the states of Michigan and Georgia have already submitted waivers to the United States Department of Education for state standardized testing for the 2020-2021 school year.

Thank you for allowing us to submit this testimony, and we stand ready to answer any questions you may have in an effort to ensure all students are given the best opportunity to learn during these unique times.

[The Ohio 8 Coalition](#) is a strategic alliance composed of the superintendents and teacher union presidents from Ohio's eight urban school districts – Akron, Canton, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Toledo and Youngstown. The Ohio 8 Coalition's mission is to work with policy makers to improve academic performance, increase graduation rates and close the achievement gap for urban children throughout Ohio. The Coalition carries out its mission by working closely with legislators, educators, parents, labor and community officials. The Coalition brings a shared administrator-teacher voice to help shape state education policy.