



Canton Professional Educators' Association  
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**September 23, 2020**

**Senate Bill 358**

Chair Lehner, Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 358. My name is Spencer Geraghty. I am a Special Education teacher in the Canton City School District and member of the Canton Professional Educators' Association, an organization of about 750 teachers in Canton.

At the September 2nd hearing for this bill, Senators Coley and Brenner asked a few questions regarding the education of students with special needs. The questions by these gentlemen were on target and underscore a problem that districts across Ohio face every day. How can the needs of students, especially those with disabilities, be best addressed and supported while COVID-19 is yet with us? I am happy to outline some of the work that has been done in Canton City related to this during questions after my testimony. However, at the present let us examine another aspect of the concern brought forth by Senators Coley and Brenner.

It is no secret that school districts face myriad challenges everyday, COVID or not. At the conclusion of last school year, we, in Canton City Schools, focused on Maslow's hierarchy of needs. For those of you who may not be familiar with this concept, [a chart is linked here](#). In summary, Maslow, a renowned 20th century psychologist, devised a five tiered pyramid of needs. Tiers five is the top of the pyramid and relates to needs of self-fulfillment and achieving one's full potential. Tiers three and four consist of needs related to the psychological: feelings of accomplishment, friendship, and a sense of belonging. Respectively, tiers one and two of the pyramid are physiological (food, water, sleep) and safety (shelter, security of self, family, resources, and family).

Irrespective of the current pandemic, children across our state have constant needs related to the first two tiers, physiological and safety. While it is hard for some to imagine, students in rural, suburban, and urban areas alike face food insecurity, homelessness, and unsafe home situations. It would not be a stretch to say every one of these struggles, in addition to others unnamed, have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

In the face of all this, school districts have the task of standing in stark contrast to uncertainty that abounds around us. For many students school is the place of consistency, safety, belonging, and esteem. It is the place young people figure out what their skill sets are and how they can use these skills to excel in life beyond the schoolhouse.

How do school districts across the state go about this task? We employ a variety of strategies. Human resource departments ensure that high quality support staff, teachers, and administrators are attracted, developed, and retained. Technology departments undertake the task of moving their districts towards 1:1 student to device ratios, training staff and students how to best utilize tech tools. Educators across the state work to secure opportunities for students to access the arts and extracurricular activities. Districts form community partnerships to provide related services and implement behavioral policies that revolve around Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS).

We provide and secure access to high-quality preschools so kindergarteners are ready to hit the ground running. We address the needs mentioned above: food insecurity, homelessness (a statutory requirement), and unsafe home situations. We test, oh do we ever test: KRA, K-2 literacy, Third-Grade reading guarantee, Ohio's State Achievement tests spanning many grade levels and subjects, AP exams, ACT/SAT, OELPA. All of this so we can have young adults walk across a stage at the end of senior year, and use their skills to, hopefully, make meaningful contributions to Ohio.

Hopefully the last two paragraphs sound familiar and, if you were counting, you noticed the mention of ten strategies. [Each Child Our Future, Ohio's Strategic Plan for Education: 2019-2024](#) presents the selfsame ten priority strategies. It is time for Ohio to take a different look at how we grade schools. In addition to testing, which is important to gauge student progress, we need to look at all that schools do. The data is there. Let's use it for a holistic look at all districts do to prepare each child for our future as Ohio.

A group of colleagues from Canton, Lorain, and Toledo have shared a presentation detailing comprehensive report card modifications. A one page overview of the presentation can be viewed [here](#); we encourage anyone who is interested in hearing the full scope of the presentation to reach out. There is no doubt countless hours and fiscal resources were dedicated to the creation of ODE's plan mentioned above. It, very simply, makes good sense that the state's report card would measure what is being worked on in the plan implemented by ODE.

While I realize the current bill is not a report card bill, per say. However, the conversation of testing, the way results are interpreted, and the report card are harmonious. If testing is to occur this year, just as the bill

dictates, results should not be used to penalize districts. Instead, the results should be used to see where students are as a result of last school year's discontinuity coupled with varied instructional delivery models for the current school year. In the meantime, let us continue the work of shaping Ohio's report card to more accurately reflect all that schools do. Every Ohioan deserves to have a full look at all their district is doing, not just an A through F resulting from testing. School districts do much more than test.

Thank you for your attention to this incredibly important matter and I look forward to answering any questions you may have at this time.

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