

Chair Manning, Vice-Chair Bird, Ranking Member Robinson, and Members of the House Primary & Secondary Education Committee:

My name is Sophia Biernat, and I am a senior at Batavia High School. I am here today to testify in support of the changes proposed in House Bill 368, which will promote equitable treatment in Ohio's education system and encourage the state's best and brightest students to take courses that adequately prepare them for the rigor of post-secondary education.

The current legislation, which requires schools to award the same weight to grades earned in CCP courses as they award to those earned in AP courses, gives some students an incentive to enroll in courses that are not sufficiently challenging. The majority of students who participate in the CCP program are those who have the capability to succeed in the AP program as well. However, CCP courses are often regarded to be less difficult than AP courses. This is because AP courses are designed to be as rigorous as their equivalent courses at four-year colleges and universities while many courses in the CCP program are taken through community colleges, where the coursework is less difficult. Since many CCP courses are less rigorous than AP courses while still offering the same grade weighting, college-bound students often prefer to participate in the CCP program. In fact, the comparative ease of CCP courses is the most common reason that students at my school provide for enrolling in CCP courses rather than AP courses.

Additionally, the nature of CCP courses in conjunction with the current weighting system provides CCP students with an unfair advantage over AP students. Since college courses last a semester while high school courses last a full year, CCP students are able to enroll in more weighted courses than AP students. A CCP student who takes five courses each semester accumulates ten weighted classes over the course of a year, while an AP student's equivalent would be five year-long classes of the same weight. While both students' classes add up to the same amount of time, the CCP student gets ten weighted credits factored into their GPA, while the AP student receives five. This causes the grade point averages and class rankings of students enrolled in the AP program to fall behind those who take CCP courses, despite the higher rigor of AP courses. GPA and class rank are typically taken into account on college applications, which means that the inaccuracies caused by the current weighting system could damage the future of AP students.

I am an example of how the current weighting system fails to accurately represent students. Although I have taken ten AP courses, matching the record for the most taken in my school's history, I am currently ranked eighth in my class of roughly 150 students. The majority of the students ranked above me have not outperformed me—we have all maintained straight As—they have simply taken CCP courses, which allowed them to gain a greater number of weighted credits in the same amount of time. I am not the only student in my school, or even in my class, who has experienced this issue, which leads me to believe that this is a common problem in high schools across the state.

If schools are permitted to weight CCP courses less than AP courses, they can counteract the double weighting effect that results from the use of semester grades, rather than annual grades like those of their AP counterparts, to calculate CCP students' GPAs. This will ensure that students' class rankings are a reflection of their efforts, *not* of where they took their courses. Allowing individual school districts to weight courses in a way that accurately reflects their difficulty also provides students who would have taken CCP classes with an incentive to take the more rigorous AP courses, which will better prepare them for college. It is imperative that the changes proposed in House Bill 368 are made in order to promote equity in how students' grades are ranked and encourage college-bound students to challenge themselves.

I am happy to answer any questions the committee may have.