

March 8, 2021

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Fedor and members of the Primary and Secondary Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of HB67. My name is Hannah Elhard, I am a 3rd grade teacher for Columbus City Schools. I am giving testimony that reflects my own views and what I believe are the best interests of my students, and am not giving testimony on behalf of my district.

It is the joy of my life to serve as a public school teacher. I love my work and am proud of the ways my school community, and my district, have come together to support students and families during this unprecedented time. Columbus City Schools (serving nearly 50,000 students) transitioned elementary students to a hybrid model on February 1st and is currently transitioning to said model with its middle and high school students. The hybrid model is structured so that I see my cohort A students on Mondays and Tuesdays, and cohort B on Thursdays and Fridays.

When we're together in person, we cram as much learning as possible into each day to make up for substantial lost time. We also reconnect and relearn how to socialize with peers, since we haven't been together for nearly a year. Every moment in-person is precious, both from an instructional and socialization perspective. We use data to guide and support our instruction daily. The first week back to in-person teaching, I assessed my students on their reading level and the number of sight words they know. That way, I could target my instruction each day to meet their exact needs. I will also do so at the end of the year to provide their 4th grade teacher with an exact jumping off point so they can begin filling in the gaps from this lost time, on day one.

At the end of each year, we conduct standardized state and federal mandated testing. The results give us data to adjust our instruction and provide support for students, by letting us know how many students are above, on, and below grade level. However the data from said assessments will not give us any new information this year. We know that invaluable time has been lost. We know that each student will need extra support next year. If the tests are conducted, we will learn what we already know now; our students need every moment possible actively learning with their teachers.

Since it is clear that there isn't any novel data to be gained from end-of-year state assessments, let me illuminate what exactly would be lost. As stated, I have 2 cohorts that I see for 2 days a week, each. After factoring in Spring Break and Memorial Day, I have 22 days left with each cohort before we begin summer break. Standardized testing looks slightly different for each grade level, I can only speak to what my students and I experience. They will be on a chromebook, working independently on their tests for over an hour each, spread out over multiple days. This would take away a substantial amount of precious time from the 22 days that we have left together, without clear benefit.

I got into teaching because of a desire to serve my community. The most important question that guides every decision I make, both small and great, is "What is best for my students?" This is one of the times that that feels absolutely clear. They need every moment of our final 22 days in-person to be focused on meeting their academic and emotional needs. This is why I full-heartedly support the passage of HB67.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my perspective and support on this important issue. I am happy to answer any follow up questions and can be reached at helhard@columbus.k12.oh.us

Sincerely,

Hannah Elhard



Eastgate Elementary, Columbus City Schools