



**Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee
Substitute House Bill 67 Testimony
Buckeye Association of School Administrators
Ohio Association of School Business Officials
Ohio School Boards Association
Ohio Association of Elementary School Administrators
Ohio Association of Secondary School Administrators
Alliance for High Quality Education
March 9, 2021**

Good afternoon, Chair Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today in support of Substitute House Bill (Sub. HB) 67. My name is Kevin Miller with the Buckeye Association of School Administrators (BASA). Joining me for this testimony and in answering your questions is Katie Johnson with the Ohio Association of School Business Officials, Will Schwartz of the Ohio School Boards Association, Barbara Shaner, representing the Ohio Association of Elementary School Administrators and the Ohio Association of Secondary School Administrators, and Tony Podojil from the Alliance for High Quality Education. Our organizations represent public school district superintendents, treasurers/CFOs, business managers and other school business officials, boards of education, and elementary and high school principals from around the state.

On behalf of our members, we appreciate your willingness to consider the provisions in Sub. HB 67 as a way to provide needed flexibility for students and school districts as the current global pandemic persists. We have commended Representatives Koehler and Bird for sponsoring Sub. HB 67 as they have responded to the school district leaders from their own legislative districts. We know that you, too, have heard from school leaders and educators from across the state regarding these issues, and you want to help.

Sub. HB 67 provides some flexibility with the required student assessments for the current school year. The bill would:

- Waive the administration of the state-required American History end-of-course exam for the 2020-2021 school year
- Extend the window for spring assessments to allow districts ample time to administer them in a way that accommodates all students in a safe, socially distanced manner
 - The deadline for ODE to report any school district performance data from the current school year would be moved from Sept. 15th to Oct. 14th, and;
 - The Superintendent of Public Instruction would be required to extend any other deadlines related to the administration of assessments accordingly.
- Permit students to use final course grades in lieu of end-of-course exam scores for meeting graduation requirements for school years 2020-2021, 2021-2022, 2022-2023, & 2023-2024
- Require the Department of Education to seek a waiver from the U.S. Secretary of Education from federal accountability and school identification requirements.

Sub. HB 67 also provides local flexibility to determine whether or not a student is on-track to graduate. The same parameters and guidance utilized in the previous school year through HB 197 would apply to the current school year. As you know, many members of the class of 2021 have experienced unprecedented and dramatic circumstances during the final two years of their high school careers. Seniors who have met course requirements and other local graduation requirements should not be prohibited from graduating as could be the case under current law.

Last week, BASA polled members to understand better the need for graduation flexibility. Two hundred thirty-four members responded to the survey; this represents about 38% of our state's public school districts. When asked the question, "Do you have Seniors who would be at risk of not graduating without the flexibility to make a local decision regarding students' 'on track' status," 87% responded "Yes." The respondents had a total of 3,927 to 4,189 seniors in danger of not graduating without the flexibility to make a local decision. This represents an average of 14% of their Senior class.

When asked about the issues that have impacted these students' ability to earn the required graduation points, responses included many reasons; among them:

- Fewer number of opportunities to take EOC exams;
- Fewer opportunities to explore alternative pathways, especially those in remote learning options;
- Separation from building support structures caused by remote and hybrid learning;
- Required isolations and quarantines resulting in the loss of direct instruction;
- Inconsistent internet connectivity;
- Stress, anxiety, fear, and inconsistent routines and schedules.

We would point out further that none of us can predict what the long term impact of the Coronavirus pandemic will be on all students. Those in future graduating classes may also experience adversity, so we will need to stay vigilant in helping them achieve academic success. Their lives may be affected for years to come.

Despite the challenges, as many of you have expressed, school leaders, classroom teachers and other education professionals have excelled in their efforts to engage students and promote continued learning during these troubling times. We urge you to continue with that recognition

by affording them the trust necessary to successfully meet the needs of their students. Sub. HB 67 represents the confidence we all have in the professionals charged with educating students, allowing them the flexibility to make decisions at the local level that fit their own students' circumstances.

We are aware that Sub. HB 67 comes to you without an emergency clause. In order for the provisions in the bill to become law in a timely manner, especially for those students hoping to graduate, an emergency clause is needed.

We urge you to approve Sub. HB 67 along with the addition of an emergency clause. This concludes our testimony. We will be happy to address your questions.