



Thank you, Chair Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Fedor, and Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee members for giving me the opportunity today to provide interested party testimony on House Bill 67.

My name is Chad Aldis, and I am the Vice President for Ohio Policy and Advocacy at the Thomas B. Fordham Institute. The Fordham Institute is an education-focused nonprofit that conducts research, analysis, and policy advocacy with offices in Columbus, Dayton, and Washington, D.C.

The last year has been incredibly challenging, as we've learned to live with Covid-19 and its many repercussions. As you know, education has been one of those areas impacted. Last March, students and teachers across the state were thrust into remote learning. Although a significant number of schools have reopened for in-person learning, the extended use of remote and hybrid models greatly reduced the number of student-teacher interactions.

House Bill 67 started off as an effort to suspend state assessments this school year. Its sponsors were forced to pivot when the Biden administration—echoing an earlier pronouncement from the Trump administration—announced that the U.S. Department of Education would not be granting waivers from the annual testing requirement of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). We support this decision and believe it's more important than ever to know precisely where students are and to ensure that resources are directed to those communities most negatively impacted by the pandemic.

HB 67, as it now stands, seeks to minimize any potential negative impacts as a result of state assessments this year and to address a few logistical issues to make the testing process a little smoother. We support the move to extend the testing window to later in the school year and to push the timeframe for reporting results back a month. These are smart, commonsense adjustments.

Things get trickier as it relates to graduation requirements. We support the language in HB 67 providing additional flexibility to this year's junior and senior classes. The classes of 2021 and 2022 are still by default subject to Ohio's previous graduation standards which asked students to earn 18 points on a series of seven end of course (EOC) exams. Given those stringent requirements, extending the flexibility granted last year for these students is prudent.

However, HB 67 goes too far in allowing course grades to count for EOC credit for sophomores and younger. The graduation requirements for those classes were just modified by this body in 2019. Students in those classes are only required to pass two EOC exams—Algebra I and English II. To be clear, passing doesn't even require a proficient score but only achieving "competency" which is in the "basic" range on the state assessment. If this year's students struggled in these core classes, it's important that they receive the extra supports they need to be successful and improve their performance. These

courses are important markers for college and career success post high school and shouldn't simply be waived.

Finally, while we aren't opposed to eliminating the U.S. History EOC exam this year, we'd urge you to give the issue careful consideration. First, the U.S. History EOC exam can only help students. If they do well on it and their government EOC, they earn a citizenship seal—part of the new graduation requirements for the class of 2023 and beyond. There are no penalties or negative repercussions if a student performs poorly. Second, having an EOC exam on U.S. History is a statement of intent. It indicates that the state has prioritized the subject and thinks it's important. These days an argument could be made that we need more emphasis on U.S. History—not less.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. I'm happy to answer any questions that you may have.