

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today and thank you for taking the time to consider HB 67. I am Gregory Soper and my comments may not reflect those of the Canton Professional Educators Association (CPEA), The Canton City School District or the Ohio Education Association(OEA). I have been a Social Studies teacher in The Canton City School District for the past 22 years.

My reasons will be different from many proponents. I am not going to discuss testing; I will not discuss measuring learning loss. We have plans or can create new plans that accomplish this. I want everyone to look at this through a different lens.

As Congress passed the most recent stimulus bill much discussion was about targeted relief and at what incomes levels should aid be cut off. One group that is ignored is our students. What are you discussing today is much more than graduation relief, it is a stimulus package for students.

Because of the pandemic students were forced to choose between their safety and their education. Whether or not schools should have reopened is not the issue at this time. Many students live with parents who are considered high risk, and many chose to attend school remotely to avoid the possibility of bringing the virus into their homes.

They made this choice knowing it would affect their education, but this required students to make a choice of the lesser of two evils.

Being so much uncertainty with what life will be like, why not provide students with a stimulus of a high school diploma? By granting this diploma we are putting students back on the path to becoming a productive citizen. What they do when they get back on track is up to them. But at least they have path.

By allowing underclassman to use their grades for air points, we are placing these students in position in which they have a clear path towards graduation. What they do after this year is up to them. They will still need to finish the job.

I understand the arguments of those who are opposed to this. But what they fail to explain is this will not turn high schools into diploma factories. A small percentage of students will graduate this year without earning a few seals. Likewise, very few underclassmen will achieve enough seals to complete the graduation requirements.

We must never forget graduation requirements as we begin the tedious process of bringing kids back to school.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote *YES* on this *important* bill. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

Gregory Soper