



Senator Andrew O. Brenner – 19th District
Sponsor Testimony
March 31, 2021
Senate Bill 145 – Revise State Report Cards

Thank you to Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Fedor and the Senate Education Committee for hearing my sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 145. Senate Bill 145 is a revamp of our state school system's accountability structure called the state report cards.

Over the past twenty plus years Ohio's students have taken a standardized test as required by the Federal Government under the No Child Left Behind Act. The results of those tests served as the basis for education policy in Ohio. The state used those tests to issue report cards on each school district. The report cards were used to inform the public and help local districts work to improve the academic performance of their students.

During the Kasich administration, Ohio's school district report cards were overhauled, putting the focus on accountability in the form of an A through F report card. The tests were changed from norm-based tests to criterion-based tests. So instead of a general knowledge test, students would instead take an exam based upon the class they just took, and student and school performance would be tied to those test results. Initially these standards were Common Core, and the tests were PARCC tests. That report card was supposed to again inform the public about the performance of students, and it broke the data down by each school building as well as the school district's overall performance.

The report card was tied to standardized tests, which in turn were based upon state standards. Local curriculums are supposed to line up with the state standards. Theoretically, if the local curriculum was tied to state standards and students took state tests that were aligned to those standards, students should be able to pass those tests. Higher performance would indicate that the school district was meeting the expectations set by the state, and lower performance would suggest that the school district was not meeting those same expectations. School districts which met expectations would expect to get a C on the state report card. Districts which performed below expectations would receive D's or F's, with B's and A's going to districts which exceeded expectations.

Arguments were made that the report cards do not reflect what is happening in the schools because the students themselves bring personal struggles with them. School districts in the A category normally have stable communities, parents, students and are in the upper end of the

socio-economic ladder, whereas school districts which perform poorly were in the low end of the socio-economic ladder.

The report card bill before you today is the result of collaboration between many groups. Those groups include The Alliance for High Quality Education, Ohio Excels, Ohio 8 Coalition, City of Columbus Schools, Ohio Association for Gifted Children and The Fordham Institute, and many others. Their contributions have been enormously beneficial to forming this legislation, and I look forward to continuing to work with them. This bill would mesh a more accurate reflection of school performance based upon expectations which include issues around the socio-economic condition of the district. The various proponents of the bill will be able to testify as to why this bill is an improvement over the current system and should be adopted to replace it.

The bill revises the state report card system starting in the 2021-2022 school year. It maintains a summative grade and component grades. It maintains the six components prescribed under current law and how they are used to calculate an overall score. It moves components around to better reflect what each component does. It prescribes new data for each component but prohibits that data from being factored into component scores. This changes how the performance index is calculated. It changes how end of course exams can be included in the performance index calculations.

The six components the report card will contain are: Achievement, Progress, Equity, Graduation, Early Literacy and Prepared for Success. Achievement and Progress will be weighted at 25% each, and the remaining four components will be weighted at 12.5% each. The scores in the report card will reflect the following descriptors: significantly exceeds state targets, exceeds state targets, meets state targets, meets few state targets, and does not meet state targets. The performance index measure is now the achievement component, overall score under the value-added progress is now the progress component, the 4 and 5-year graduation measure is the graduation component, and the K-3 literacy measure is the early literacy component.

We intend to introduce a substitute bill later that will continue incorporating changes made to the district grading system. Those changes will include the elimination of the A through F grades and replacement of those grades with a 5-star based system. The change is made to reflect what the district is doing in a positive light, as well as reflect incremental improvement or regression. It is felt that a star-based system can easily show a parent, teacher, student or administrator how a school is doing in each category while trying not to label a district in such a way that might cause it to lose or gain good teaching talent. A substitute bill will also contain a change to the adoption of rule changes, which will go through the JCARR process.

In the end, this report card should be used by school districts, teachers, parents, students and even legislators as a reflection of what has changed in a school district or building so that improvements can be made to student performance. After all, this is about making sure future generations have a solid background in the core areas of English, math, science, American

Government, and American History in order to become successful outside of our primary and secondary education system. We want students to have the ability to think, grow, and choose paths that enhance and harness their own talents so that they can become successful stewards of our nation.

I want to thank all those who spent countless hours working on this plan. It took input from many groups, teachers, administrators, school and business leaders to put this plan together. It is a plan to help lift our schools and bring about positive change to our public education system. Thank you to the members of the Ohio Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee, to the researchers at LSC, and our own staff for all your efforts. While I am happy to answer any questions you may have, you might want to hold off the technical questions for those who spent the time putting this plan together, as they will have the technical background in explaining why the changes were made. Thank you again for your consideration, and I encourage you to support Senate Bill 145.