



May 3, 2021

To Members of the Ohio General Assembly:

As you work to strengthen Ohio's economy and improve Ohio's workforce system, the business community wants you to know that it strongly supports school and district report cards that give parents and communities insight into how well their schools are helping students learn. The General Assembly is currently considering Senate Bill 145, which we believe will make report cards more accurate, fair, transparent, and prioritize the success of all students. We encourage you to support Senate Bill 145.

Over the past several years, many of Ohio's employers have struggled to find enough skilled talent to fill positions. The pandemic has made this even more of a challenge. The key to building a strong workforce in Ohio is starting early, preparing our students for success after high school, and, ultimately, increasing the number of Ohioans with high-value credentials and postsecondary degrees.

We believe that school and district report cards are essential ingredients for improving student outcomes in Ohio. Report cards give parents, families, and members of the community – the primary audience of the report cards – an annual snapshot of how well students are learning. While Ohio's current report cards have been a model for innovation and transparency, it has become clear that the report card needs to have significant updates.

Seeking to improve the report card, a diverse group of stakeholders – the business community, education associations, student advocates, and other stakeholder groups – developed the proposal now found in Senate Bill 145. The reforms focus on ensuring equity, counting all students, streamlining the components, and maintaining transparency.

While we have long supported letter grades as the basis for report card ratings, we believe using a 1-5 star rating system can also be an effective way to communicate to parents and the public. A star rating system is far more transparent than other proposals that only include ambiguous text ratings. Keeping five performance levels on the report card, as proposed by Senate Bill 145, is a critical element of the plan. Five levels will allow for comparisons over time so stakeholders can identify trends and growth opportunities. We would strongly oppose any proposal to move away from five performance levels.

The bill includes a robust measure to ensure that there is a focus on reading in the elementary grades, the most important and necessary foundational education skill. Senate Bill 145 also features a component that measures how well schools and districts prepare our students above and beyond graduation requirements for the next chapter in their lives after high school, whether that is entering the workforce, higher education, or the military.

We are convinced that Senate Bill 145 is an important and very necessary step toward addressing concerns with the state report card. **Please join us and the diverse cross section of Ohio's business community we represent in our enthusiastic support for passage of Senate Bill 145.**