



Education Division

SB 145 & HB 110 Proponent Testimony
Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee
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Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee, my name is Jennifer Schorr and I am the Associate Director of the Education Division of Buckeye Community Hope Foundation. I am grateful for the opportunity to provide this testimony today on behalf of my organization. Buckeye Community Hope Foundation is a statewide sponsor of 45 community schools serving nearly 14,000 students across 11 cities in Ohio. We are rated Exemplary by the Ohio Department of Education.

I am here today to express support for SB 145. The provisions in this bill will allow our schools to demonstrate their continued improvement and will provide clarity to the data reported and measured on the report card. Our organization appreciates the focus that SB 145 places on equity and ensuring that every student counts. Buckeye is committed to assisting the legislature in implementing report card reform for the 2021-2022 school year.

While Buckeye Community Hope Foundation supports the provisions in SB 145, I wanted to take the opportunity to address a few areas that we feel may need additional clarity in the current version of the proposed legislation. We understand the report card contains many technical details and that we will see additional amendments in the upcoming substitute bill. Our suggestions are as follows:

Value Added Scoring

The boomerang effect, currently an A to F swing, in Value Added scoring is a problem in all schools and is not reflective of the school's real performance. Keeping the heaviest weight on the 1-year VA measure is an important step to fixing this issue.

Testing

The overwhelming amount of testing that occurs is detrimental to student performance. Eliminating all the duplicative testing, especially in 3rd grade, allows schools the time to focus on creating strong learning environments that are supportive of students.

Schools absolutely need flexibility in choosing their diagnostic test. We would like the flexibility to use norm-referenced tests of choice expanded to all schools, or at least to schools that are C and above in achievement or progress.

While the Dropout Prevention and Recovery report card components reflect the most important accountability considerations for these schools, the 75% participation rate on the STAR test (formally NWEA) must be removed and the demotion factor eliminated. This participation rate does not look at individual student growth, but rather focuses strictly on the number of students tested and often are not even the same students from fall to spring.

We would additionally appreciate a moment to discuss issues not contained in Senate Bill 145 or HB 110, but would like consideration for their inclusion:

Blended Learning

Remote Learning Plans were implemented during the current pandemic as a mechanism for public schools to meet the educational needs of their students while also protecting health and safety.

Schools have been able to effectively pivot from in-person to hybrid to remote learning when extenuating circumstances were out of their control. Essentially, public schools have implemented “blended learning” at various times throughout the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years. There is not a doubt that this type of flexibility has changed the way we view and implement public education in the future.

We request that a school’s ability to utilize a remote learning plan as their primary method of instruction become a permanent option in Ohio for all public schools to specifically address the unpredictable need for calamity days, recovery of lost days/hours for a student, pandemic outbreaks, and other instances where learning in-person is disrupted.

We request the definition of “blended learning” and its effect on attendance and funding be removed from law and rule as it would not be necessary to distinguish these methods as they would be an option for all public schools in Ohio.

Automatic Withdrawal

Dropout prevention and recovery students have already experienced a significant event or several events that have disrupted their learning pathway. Students who live in poverty alone are six times more likely to drop out than their peers not experiencing poverty. These events do not stop just because they have enrolled in a dropout prevention and recovery school. It is a challenge every day for a student and staff to mitigate or remove these barriers to attendance and learning. It is not uncommon for a drop out student to miss several consecutive days and then re-emerge to attempt to graduate from high school, only to be forced to dis-engage again for a period of time because of their risk factors.

The requirement of a drop out recovery school to withdrawal a student who fails to participate in seventy-two consecutive hours of the learning opportunities offered to the student is just another and significant barrier to learning. When a student is withdrawn automatically and then attends immediately after, they must complete a new enrollment packet, take an assessment, and start over in the process. We have created another barrier to learning that does not align with the purpose of a drop out recovery and prevention program.

We recommend removing this barrier to graduation and return the threshold to the 105-hour rule.

Sponsor Evaluation System

The Ohio Department of Education has collected comprehensive data from sponsors in compliance monitoring, quality authorizing practices, and academic performance for (5) full fiscal years beginning in 2014. In addition, ODE has continued to collect compliance and quality practice data for the most recent past and current school years.

Ohio currently has (20) active sponsors of community schools subject to the annual sponsor evaluation down from (69) sponsors in 2014. The FY19 evaluation results rated 80% of all active sponsors Effective or Exemplary overall. Over 95% of all students enrolled in a community school in Ohio have an overall Effective or Exemplary rated sponsor. With the absence of a complete Report Card for schools for the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school year due to the pandemic, sponsors subject to an annual evaluation are not receiving overall ratings, yet have continued to demonstrate high ratings in compliance monitoring and quality practices and their ability to effectively open, monitor and close schools.

The Ohio Association of Charter School Authorizers (OACSA), in which I serve as President, has continued to meet with the Department and recently provided six pages of written feedback with specific ways to improve the execution of the evaluation and improve the content of the tools themselves. Unfortunately, we have been unable to achieve substantive changes of improvement.

Keeping in mind the Department's expressed desire of operating through the *lens of continuous improvement*, it is now more than ever important to get it right. Buckeye supports accountability for sponsors and the implementation of a credible, realistic, and best practice based approach to an evaluation system. It is important to note that most if not all Sponsors at the end of the current review cycle will not be subject to the evaluation until the 23-24SY. In order to have appropriate accountability for sponsors, we highly recommend the following:

- Suspend the current evaluation system;
- Close any current poor rated sponsors; and
- Establish a Sponsor Evaluation System Legislative Committee comprised of Senate and House Education committee members, representatives from the Ohio Association of Charter School Authorizers (OACSA), and representatives of the Ohio Department of Education to review and develop the next smart progression of the Sponsor Evaluation System to take effect in FY24.

The National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) who the current quality practices portion of the evaluation is based, is working across the country with other states to develop and implement authorizer evaluations. Ohio must take the time to engage in this work and improve our current system.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today before the Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee. Buckeye fully supports the introduction of SB 145 & and truly appreciates the hard work Senator Brenner and his staff put into this legislation to provide a report card that is reflective of the success of all students. I am happy to answer any questions you may have at this time regarding either bill.