

**Testimony in Support of House Bill 110
Proposed Fair School Funding Plan - Poverty and Preschool**

**Senate Education Committee
Senator Andrew Brenner, Chair
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**Marlon Styles, Superintendent
Middletown City School District**

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Senate Primary and Secondary Education committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide opponent testimony on Senate Bill (SB 145), which would make revisions to Ohio's School Report Card. My name is Marlon Styles, proud Superintendent of Middletown City School District. As one of the Superintendent's selected to be a member of the original 133rd General Assembly bipartisan report card study committee and a member of the bipartisan workgroup with Representative Jones that developed HB 200, I am testifying today in opposition of SB 145.

I recently had the honor to hear Dr. Bettina Love deliver a keynote. She said "you have to be at the table for the design for the system to think of you." In the past, not everyone has been at the table. As a result, Ohio's accountability system does not think of many school districts or their students. Simply put, because of this ineffective practice, Ohio's accountability system is failing many school districts and students. In 2020, the Alliance for Excellent Education published an article titled "When Equity is Optional" (<https://all4ed.org/when-equity-is-optional/>) that included research conducted across 10 states including Ohio. The article highlighted the disparities found in Ohio's public schools based on school ratings. The Ohio accountability system shows 30% of White students attend a Lower ranked school compared to 52% of Black students. It also showed 82% of White students attend a High ranked school compared to 4% of Black students. This is what happens when an accountability system doesn't invite you to the table for the design. Dust off the extra leaves to the table, grab the chairs from the corners of the room, send out a few email invites, and host a real discussion with diverse people about real equitable report card reform.

Let's take a moment to visit the devastating inequities currently in Ohio's education system.

- Inequities in the school funding (Fair School Funding Plan provides the solution)
- Resource inequities
- Academic disparities for students of color
- Inequities in access to technology
- Inequities in access to preschool

Please consider these two school districts

	<u>District 1</u>	<u>District 2</u>
College Credit Plus Course Offerings	X	X
Early Literacy Initiatives	X	X
Internship Programs	X	X
Mentoring for Students	X	X
Hope Squad Team	X	X
Computer Science Pathway	X	X
English Learner Multi-Tiered Supports	X	X
1:1 Technology K-12	X	X
Portrait of a Graduate	X	X
3 Year Positive Achievement Trends	X	X
Overall Summative A-F Rating	?	?

What is the overall rating of District 1? What is the overall rating of District 2? If I shared the demographics, would that help? If I shared the free and reduced lunch rate, would that help? If I shared suburban, rural or urban, would that help? If I shared the zip codes, would that help? My hope is that all the things the districts are doing for children is what is most important, and not a single summative grade. Opportunities are available for students, and both districts are showing continuous improvement. Parents and community members would be proud to see the district is improving, providing access to technology, supporting diverse learners, offering career pathways, supporting the social emotional needs of its scholars, investing in early learners, and college bound students. Still want to know the overall summative ratings?

Why do I oppose SB 145? It will continue the current 5 star designation system that ranks all high poverty school districts at the bottom, results in urban districts scoring low, historical disparities in achievement of African American and Latinx students. Why do I oppose SB 145? It continues the oppressive nature of the EdChoice Voucher system that takes advantage of the report card and places poverty districts in eligibility. What if I told you that District 1 was EdChoice eligible? That the district is 53% white and 78% of their vouchers are for white students. That the district is 19% African American and only 9% of their vouchers are African American students. Those statistics represent the data for Middletown City School district. I

wonder if one day our elected officials will shift priority away from an overall letter grade to addressing the disparities found in the EdChoice data.

Key areas in SB 145 to offer strong opposition include:

- SB 145 maintains the letter grade system
- SB 145 changes “gap closing” to “equity”
- SB 145 maintains an overall grade

Key areas in HB 200 to offer strong support include:

- No overall summative rating
- Six performance ratings
- 3 year trends for each rating
- Five performance measures (Achievement, Progress, Graduation, Gap Closing, 3GRG)
- 6 ranges of scores for achievement assessments (including Approaching Proficient)

SB 145 changes the Gap Closing component to Equity. I want to be very clear in stating my opposition for this proposed change. Breaking news..renaming Gap Closing as an Equity component is not equity, it is disrespectful. Earlier you heard the disparities in Ohio’s data from the Alliance for Excellent Education research. Do you think the black or brown students represented in the data feel that renaming components of an accountability system will be more equitable for them? Changing the title doesn’t change the reality, and for that I am in opposition.

If you would like to streamline components then adopt the HB 200 recommendation to eliminate the Prepared for Success component and report the data inside of the Graduation component. HB 200 and SB 145 both offer short term changes to the current accountability system.If you would like to have a report card that ensures equity, my recommendation is for you to re-establish the Report Card study group, task them with delivering a dashboard that ensures equity for all at its core.

If this is not the time, then when is? If this is not the time to embrace an equitable school funding system, then when is? If this is not the time to embrace an equitable school report card, then when is? If this is not the time to be emotionally upset about the disparities and disproportionalities caused by the current accountability system, then when is? If this is not the time to design a system that thinks about ALL of Ohio’s districts and students, then when is it? If this is not the time to reform the very accountability system that enables the voucher system to deepen the resource gaps that so many public school students face, then when is?

I ask this driving question: What is the purpose of the information in the Ohio's report card? It is not to rank high poverty school districts at the bottom? I can tell you what it is supposed to be. A communication tool transparently showcasing what a school district is doing to educate the students. A tool that allows parents to understand where the district is showing increases or decreases in student learning. A tool that includes the successes of the graduating class showcasing their life ready dispositions. A tool that provides accountability and supports continuous improvement.

Today, I ask Ohio's Senators to stop supporting the current oppressive system. Stop supporting the oppressive current school funding structure. Stop supporting the oppressive accountability system. Stop supporting a system that separates the haves and the have nots. Invest in building an equity centered accountability dashboard. Invest in our students by supporting HB 110 (Fair School Funding Plan). Support HB 200 in its entirety. Celebrate how valuing equity for Ohio's children will result in improved student outcomes for all students. Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Senate Primary and Secondary Education committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am happy to answer any questions.