

Written Testimony on Senate Bill 145
Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee
May 25, 2021

Chair Brenner and members of the Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present written testimony on behalf of the State Board of Education and the board's legislative committee in support of report card reform. My name is Laura Kohler and I am president of the State Board of Education.

This year the Board convened a new Legislative Committee. The goal of the committee is to provide in-depth analysis of major education legislative and policy issues to the full Board. The Board hopes to support your work by becoming a thought partner and a value added resource. The legislative committee does not plan to endorse any particular bill, but rather examine each bill's contents and determine the bill's alignment with ODE's five-year strategic plan for education: *Each Child, Our Future*. The committee carefully reviewed House Bill 200 and Senate Bill 145 and recommended that however the bill is enacted, it should:

- Eliminate the current A-F letter grade rating system and replace it with a new rating system that is clear and easy for parents to understand.
- Adopt a new Equity component that will shine light on the performance of student groups to ensure schools are accountable for the academic achievement of ALL students in the State of Ohio.
- Restructure the Prepared for Success component into a single tier that awards credit equally for each item and that includes additional measures of college, career and life preparedness. In adding measures to this component, the legislature should consider the extent to which each item included is accessible to all students. Prepared for Success should be a rated component of the report card.
- Structure components so that ALL students are included in the measure. The Board does not support structuring any component, including K-3 literacy, Graduation or Prepared for Success, that is designed to exclude members of any student population. Every student, regardless of mobility, should be included in a measure of K-3 literacy.
- Support a measure for K-3 Literacy that recognizes that promotion and proficiency are two important concepts. Also, districts should be recognized for improvement.

The resolution was adopted by the full Board on April 13, 2021.

I would also like to offer a few personal comments, not on behalf of the board, but rather as a mother, a grandmother, a former member of two local boards of education and a proud Ohio citizen. I'd like to express my consternation about one particular provision in HB 200. I am incredibly disappointed in the part of the bill that excludes students who have moved from one district to another at any time during the first four years of their education from the K-3 literacy accountability measure. I certainly understand how this benefits school districts as they will only be accountable for the students they have educated for the entirety of the early elementary years. I cannot however, see how this in any way benefits children. Children in the first, crucial, years of school. Children in the years that set the tone for their academic future. Children that research proves will be at a disadvantage compared to their peers, struggle more in school and have reduced opportunities for successful outcomes if they cannot read by the time they finish third grade. This measure doesn't pass the buck. It eliminates the buck.

I wonder if those who drafted this language understand how many young children will be impacted by this exclusion from accountability. The State Board asked ODE to do an analysis of mobility of K-3 students in the State of Ohio and found that only 62.1% of 4th grade students in school year 2019-2020 spent their entire kindergarten thru 3rd grade school years at the same district with no movement. This percentage excludes those students that show up as 4th graders in the 2019-2020 school year without any prior enrollment history. Therefore, if the legislature adopts a K-3 Literacy measure that only includes students who remained in the same school for these early years, it will not reflect the learning of almost 40% of Ohio's youngest learners.

The percentage of students for whom no school district would be held accountable includes many of the youngest of the approximately 35,000 students who are children of military families in Ohio. In addition to the challenges these families face during active duty overseas deployment, they are also subject to reassignment and relocation. This bill eliminates their school districts' accountability for ensuring that their children become proficient readers.

I've spent my adult life advocating for children. When I pray for my now adult children and small grandchildren each night, I pray for three things - health, happiness and success in whatever they choose to do in life. I pray for the opportunity for each and every child in Ohio to be successful in whatever they choose to do with their lives. Those of us in the education policy arena have a weighty responsibility to do everything we can to provide that opportunity to every child. We can't offer that opportunity to each child if no one is willing to take responsibility for teaching them to read no matter when they join their classmates and no matter where they are when they join.

I appreciate your work on behalf of Ohio - particularly its students - and thank you for your willingness to read this testimony.

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