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Chairman Duffey, ranking member Sweeney and members of the House Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee, as a former teacher with the Youngstown City Schools, where I taught in the social studies and law enforcement departments for 31 years, I found it central to education that children learn the importance of cursive writing. There are numerous reasons why it is still important today, and will be in the future, and I see no reason to do away with it just because it “may be the thing to do” without having first established empirical research to back such a premise.

How sad it would be if future generations of historians could not read, nor understand, journal entries, manuscripts, and original writings of famous and infamous people alike throughout history. Imagine too how much knowledge and insight would have been lost by simply not understanding cursive writing. And how about those letters written by airmen, sailors and soldiers from the front lines of war? What valuable lessons learned by reading such letters would have been lost if cursive writing was never taught. As an interesting side-note, one of the most famous military men in history, George Washington, wrote some very interesting letters to his wife Martha which I had the pleasure of reading while doing post-graduate work in history at Youngstown State University.

The historian is similar to a detective in that a lot of information has often to be collected in order to put the pieces together to form the big picture. What a shame that would be for our future historians were not able to read original transcripts, documents and the like. I remember, in college having to write about the exploitations of Lewis and Clark and having to read dozens of original manuscripts, personal letters and diaries that were all written in cursive. I especially remember reading some of the letters that Captain Meriwether Lewis wrote to President Thomas Jefferson, both before and after his expedition with William Clark and noting what a thrill it was to be able to do so. I can only imagine what my paper would have been like without being able to read cursive.

As an adjunct instructor in the Criminal Justice and Forensic Science Department at Youngstown State University for the past 38 years I have often asked my students to write essays when taking a test. Although they have been instructed to use cursive, some print and some even use a combination of both. Unfortunately, penmanship seems to have become a lost art. During these many years I have had very little “push-back” from students when asked to write their essays in cursive. In fact, many of them actually enjoy doing so because there is no need for them to lug a computer to class or to go looking for a computer in order to take their test as they must do for some classes. Also, many have stated that it is much easier for them to put their thoughts down first via cursive writing than it would be if they had to use a computer. To expedite their writing I have even noticed that some of my students use an app on their tablets and phones that allow them to take notes in class using cursive writing as opposed to typing. I surmise this is probably because the majority of them use the two finger approach to typing. Go figure. Food for thought… If cursive writing is such a thing of the past, then why is there an app for that? On another note, there are classes in the criminal justice and forensic science areas that require students to take field notes and drawings. All of which require cursive writing. We also have a police academy at YSU that requires their cadets to take field notes as well. This is because once they graduate and become police officers, much of their time in law enforcement will be spent taking notes in one form or another. In fact, many of their police reports will be completed using cursive writing. It is also a common practice to have victims and witnesses use cursive writing when giving statements or filling out various legal forms because of their unfamiliarity with a computer.

Without reservation I wholeheartedly encourage the passing of House Bill 58 to add handwriting to the curriculum. What a shame it would be for future generations to have to hire an “expert” before they could even understand a birthday card once written to them by their parent, grandmother or grandfather.

I would like to thank you for allowing me to share my thoughts with you. I wish I could give direct testimony, but students at the university are counting on me to be there for them.