



EDUCATION
COMMITTEE

Witness Form

Today's Date 12/5/17

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Organization Representing: United Way of Summit County

Testifying on Bill Number: 216

Testimony: Verbal Written Both

Testifying As: Proponent Opponent Interested Party

Are you a Registered Lobbyist? Yes No

Special Requests: _____

TESTIMONY
SB 216
OHIO SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Statement of

Dr. Nichole M. Booker
Vice President, Strategic Affairs
United Way of Summit County
90 North Prospect St. Akron, OH 44304

Submitted for the record
Senate Education Committee
December 5, 2017

Chairwoman Lehner, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Education Committee:

My name is Nichole Booker, Vice President of Strategic Affairs at United Way of Summit County. I hold a doctorate in Public Administration focused on Applied Policy and am honored to hold a senior leadership position at United Way (UW). My experience and current work is focused on complex social issues with emphasis on creating and sustaining non-traditional cross-sector partnerships; creating platforms to stimulate innovative ways to better leverage existing resources to build effective solutions to address those issues. I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of United Way of Summit County and our Public Policy Committee of the UW Board, to encourage amending Senate Bill 216 to retain kindergarten diagnostic assessments.

Preserving the kindergarten assessment is critical to the education and workforce systems. Study after study demonstrate the impact of quality early education; a high return on investment strategy to strengthen the workforce pipeline and supply the kind of workers Ohio companies demand.

We also understand the issues that many of the current regulations and assessments present to our schools and teachers, including taking away valuable time from instruction and learning. We support a focus on increasing efficiency within our education system, but consider the kindergarten readiness assessment

a vital tool at the beginning of the pipeline that provides invaluable data to drive decision-making early.

The Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) has been in place several years with significant resources invested into its development and refinement. The first cohort of Kindergartners is in the 3rd grade this year, allowing us the ability to track performance and the relationship between Kindergarten readiness and a child's ability to read at grade level by third grade (a critical predictor of future education attainment, including middle school performance, high school graduation and college attainment).

A statewide assessment is not only critically important for Ohio to understand and plan for the needs of children, especially the 40% of those who come to Kindergarten not ready to learn, but it is the measure of success for investments in quality early childhood education programs. **Public and private investments in local communities and statewide are driven by this measure.**

If SB 216 is enacted as currently proposed:

- Ohio will not be able to say anything about the relationship between quality early childhood experiences and school readiness, or longer-term outcomes like passing the Third Grade Reading Guarantee, or high school graduation; a missed opportunity.
- Elimination of the KRA would disrupt the considerable progress made locally, and in Ohio, towards increasing access to quality early learning.
- Ohio will eliminate our ability to measure school readiness for Ohio children collectively as the choice for districts to select another measure will not allow for comparison across the state.
- Ohio will not be able to identify strengths and needs of children across the essential domains of school readiness known to predict later academic and social success.

As supporters of education to build a strong workforce for Ohio, we urge you to support preserving the KRA as we all continue to build and grow public-private partnerships to expand high quality early learning.