

Members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee,

I am Gretchen Tash. I stand before you today as a veteran educator with 32 years of teaching in public schools. I teach 8<sup>th</sup> grade in Cincinnati for Princeton City School District. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of HB 239.

Along with my fellow educators, parents, and students, I am deeply concerned with the amount of testing students endure. I have brought with me today personal stories from these stakeholders. As you listen to the words from public school parents, students and educators, please consider not only the impact standardized testing is having on the educational experience of students in the districts you represent, but also how you can legislate a solution to this crisis.

This first account is from a middle school math teacher:

*Here is the breakdown, by the number of class periods it takes to administer, the mandated typical assessments in my math classes this school year:*

***Measure of Academic Progress (MAP): 10 class periods throughout the year***

***Weekly Common Formatives: 25 class periods***

***Summative Assessments: 8 class periods***

*This is 43 class days of assessments in one school year...in just ONE course. Now let's take this a step further, considering the stress level of the stakeholders. During the first week of school we all administer MAP, as the teacher, I will use this data to drive my instruction. I discover from disaggregating the data, that 60% of my students are 1 to 2 grade levels behind. Stress levels are immediately increased because I know I have a limited amount of time to get my students up to speed. Let's do some basic math to see how much time I will actually have to get them ready for the End of Year AIR Assessment.*

***43 days lost to assessments***

***25 days remain in the school year after state testing...the test has come and gone, yet I have concepts still to cover.***

***5 days of the year are lost to student Meetings/Assemblies/etc.***

***4 calamity days/late start/or tests run over to the next day because MAP tests are not timed***

***Total 80 days.***

*The school year for my students is 176 days. So after accounting for the aforementioned activities, that leaves 96 class periods for instruction to prepare for these assessments that will cover concepts intended for an entire school year of 176 days. The ugly truth is that I have 55% of instruction time to complete 100% of a curriculum. That is just CRAZY!!"*

These comments come from a school counselor and parent of elementary and middle school children:

*"I am raising a 4th grade daughter and a 6th grade son. My son excels academically, and while taking tests doesn't stress him, taking frequent tests is a source of frustration and makes him not want to go to school.*

*My fourth grade daughter loves school and hates when there's a school break. She enjoys working hard and completing homework; unusual to say the least. However, during testing season, there is always a shift in her affect. She's much more sensitive, cries easily and dreads going to bed because she knows when she goes to school there will be more testing. The duration of a testing session exasperates her. When she gets home, she's testy and tuckered out. She loses her appetite and doesn't want to eat.*

*She stresses over disappointing her teachers and her classmates if she doesn't meet her expected growth target. She never feels like her best effort is good enough no matter how much she prepares or how hard she tries. Her self-esteem and zeal for school decreases during testing season and when test season is over, she is physically, mentally and emotionally done.*

*My kids are so much more than a test score. Their teachers are so much more than a value-added score, and my school district is far greater than its report card indicates. It saddens me to watch my daughter, who used to love everything about school, lose her zest for learning because of the effects of testing and test preparation. It is time to reduce the amount of mandated, high-stakes tests required of children in Ohio public schools."*

The closing comments come from my 8th graders. When I let them know that I was coming today to testify on their behalf, to speak about overtesting, I received a standing ovation. I told them that I would be their voice. Here is what they want you to know. I have pulled excerpts from the essays they willingly submitted.

- *"I am not a score. I am a curious teenager who rarely gets time to explore topics of personal interest at school."*
- *"My AIR test scores don't show what I know. They show how seriously I take the test...not very..."*
- *"I bet if the elected officials had to take these tests they make us take and have their scores reported in the newspaper, testing would be cut back a lot."*
- *"I'm not very smart, and all these tests keep reminding me of that. I never missed a day of school this year because I love my classes. I love my*

*teachers, and I love to learn. I just wish I didn't have to take so many tests. I wish there was a state test on playing the cello. I'm good at that!"*

- *"I don't know whether or not I did good on the AIR test this year. I don't care, really, because I know I learned a lot from my classes, and I know I've done my best. No test can prove what I have learned. My success in life will show that!"*

In closing, I want to challenge you to consider support for HB 239 which would make meaningful reductions to the testing load of students by eliminating four high school end-of-course exams. Additionally, HB 239 would provide a way to examine testing at the local level by requiring local school districts that exceed the statutory testing caps provide that information to the Ohio Department of Education which would be required then to issue an annual report on time spent on state and district-mandated testing in Ohio's schools. Thank you for your consideration on this important issue that affects Ohio's public school students.