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Senate Education Committee Senate Bill 358 Proponent Testimony September 2, 2020

Chair Lehner, Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Fedor, and Members of the Senate Education Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today regarding SB 358. I am Dr. Erik Roush, and I lead the Policy & Government Affairs work for Columbus City Schools.

While we generally support SB 358, I wanted to take the opportunity to raise two issues that are not addressed in the current version of the legislation. Both are related to assessments required to be given yet this fall and the associated challenges we and other school districts operating in a virtual format will face.

The first issue pertains to the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment – Revised (KRA-R), which must be completed by November 1st. This assessment may not be given virtually; as such, schools and districts that are not meeting in-person in either a full-time or hybrid format may struggle to meet the deadline. The second issue involves the fall administration of the third grade English language arts Ohio State Test (OST), which is currently scheduled for the end of October (October 19-30). Again, this assessment may not be given virtually. For schools and districts that are not scheduled to start until after this testing window, this is problematic.

We certainly understand and support the underlying reason to prohibit virtual administration of these assessments – namely, test validity. We are also not raising the issue of the other diagnostic assessments for grades K-3 because those have controls in place for virtual administration designed to maintain their validity. In short, it is the KRA-R and the third grade English language arts OST that provide the greatest challenge in a virtual setting.

In a normal year, we would not be before you making these requests. In a normal year, we would not need to be balancing the health and safety of our students and staff against establishing a baseline for student academic performance. In a normal year, we would not need to sift through ever changing recommendations from a myriad of public health entities...yet we are in anything but a normal year.

If the past six months have taught us anything, it is that we must be adaptable. We believe that SB 358 provides the basis for addressing these particular issues, and it lies in the extension of the authority of the State Superintendent to extend certain deadlines. If a period was added to line 437 prior to the strike-through, and the language that was deleted in lines 446 and 447 was restored, the State Superintendent would have the authority to extend the deadline for the KRA and the testing window for the fall administration of the third grade English language arts OST until schools were back in session. Should the Department have concerns with shifting the testing window for the third grade OST, another option could be to eliminate the requirement to give the assessment for the 2020-2021 school year only, although such a change may require further harmonization with language added to HB 164 that tied the prohibition from retaining a student who does not attain a passing score on the fall administration. Keep in mind that schools and districts would still be required to give a diagnostic assessment.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I am happy to answer any questions.