

Chairwoman Peggy Lehner, Vice-Chairman Andrew Brenner, Ranking Member Fedor and Senate Education Committee members,

My name is Gregory Soper. I am beginning my 21<sup>st</sup> year as a Social Studies teacher in the Canton City School District. My testimony represents those of myself and are shared by Canton Professional Educators Association President Paul Palomba, however they may not accurately reflect those of The Canton City Schools or the Ohio Education Association.

I am testifying in favor of Senate Bill 358. Many of you know me from our previous discussions and most of you can attest that I am not anti-test. I am not anti-accountability. In fact, in 2018 I along with CPEA President Paul Palomba and Vice-President Lynne Watson presented a graduation plan (one in which Vice-Chairman Brenner forward to Governor Kasich's team and was viewed favorably by The Fordham Institute). I believe that the plan we created was much more rigorous than what we have today. I mention this today because I want to make it clear that I am not testifying in asking for no accountability. I will not discuss the talking points about the negatives of testing.

What I am asking is that state testing must be paused because of the logistical nightmares it presents. While it is true that nearly 70% of Ohio students returned to some form of in person learning. This is because schools have done a great job in attempting to make the safest environment possible.

State testing does just the opposite. In many cases we will have too many kids in a testing room for too long of a period. There can be no open movement of students like there can in a regular school day because of test security. A testing room closely mirrors a regular classroom in the non-covid era. We will be unable to enforce social distancing policies because of the increased number of kids in testing rooms.

I continue to be befuddled with how little we know of when the virus will peak. In March when Ohio was averaging less than 500 new cases a day the state was shutdown. We were told that the peak would occur in May.

As I have said testing when done properly can be beneficial. I use the data from the tests to refine my instruction on what the tests says kids are weak in. If we test, none of the data can be reliable. If we force schools to test, we will have another run on parents opting out of testing, some will refuse to come and some will just enter the testing room and click on any answer to just comply. How will this type of data be useful to me next year?

Lisa Gray of Ohio Excels discusses the need for data in her testimony on September 16<sup>th</sup>. However, she implies that there will be no testing. This is untrue. Districts will continue to 3<sup>rd</sup> party vendor assessments to students throughout the year. The only difference is the testing will be determined by the locals and not the state. In my district, we will be using MAP testing to assess students. We know that a score of 235 would equal a passing score in Algebra 1 and 250 in English 2. The only difference is that MAP testing can be done in a manner that will ease student anxieties regarding covid. MAP testing in my district will be done at least three times. It is not as if we are not assessing, we are merely doing this on a local level.

None of us have any idea what to expect with the virus. Why would we want to risk the health of countless of people because of testing? Ohio adopted these next generation graduation tests in 2013

and seven years later we have never once enforced it. I have lost count how many times since 2013 have we modified graduation?

I ask you why should we risk the health of Ohioans over something we constantly change?

If there any questions, that I can answer, I may be reached at [greg.soper@hotmail.com](mailto:greg.soper@hotmail.com) or by phone at 330-280-7840.

I thank you for all you do for Ohio students.

Gregory J. Soper.