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Interested Party Testimony SB 168
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Ohio House Primary & Secondary Education Committee – SB 168 – Proponent Testimony

Chairman Bird, Vice Chair Fowler Arthur, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the House Primary & Secondary Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today in support of Senate Bill 168. My name is Shawn Lenney, and I am the Executive Director of Greater Ohio Virtual School, a Drop Out Prevention and Recovery School serving students statewide.

I am here today on behalf of the Ohio Online Learning Coalition and the over 30,000 students educated through e-schools in the State of Ohio. Currently, students enrolled in chartered virtual schools in Ohio must travel to testing sites across the state to complete state-mandated tests in a face-to-face setting. This creates substantial challenges for students and families. It is imperative we understand the hurdles to this process and address them by providing an equitable, accessible, and efficient solution for our students served by virtual schools.

For students and families of virtual schools, the obstacles associated with traveling to a testing site can be wide-ranging, and include:

• Disruption of employment and possible economic impact for parents who are forced to take time off to travel to testing locations.
• Financial burdens of travel costs, lodging, childcare, and other related expenses.
• Lack of accessible testing sites for students with disabilities or medical issues. In addition, many families choose virtual curriculum due to significant medical or health needs and cannot travel.
• Significant loss in instructional time due to teachers traveling to proctor exams, leaving students without their educators and mentors.
• Testing in unfamiliar locations increases mental health concerns among students, leading to poor performance outcomes that do not accurately reflect student knowledge and skill.
• Students are often required to take multiple tests in a single day or over consecutive days, increasing test fatigue and affecting the quality of their testing results.
• The excessive travel demands are particularly harsh on rural students who live in remote areas of the state, further limiting their access to quality education.

These are just some of the many negative impacts virtual students face when traveling to a testing site.

The solution to these challenges is clear: implementing remote proctoring of state testing. Remote proctoring has proven to be a safe, secure, and effective alternative that can alleviate these burdens and provide a more equitable testing environment for virtual school students. Using secure technology and web-based conferencing tools, teachers can provide real-time proctoring of students taking state assessment tests remotely, ensuring the integrity of the testing process. With strong procedures and safeguards in place, remote testing can be administered securely and in full compliance with all state and federal laws, addressing any concerns about test integrity. Several states, including Idaho, California, Iowa, and Oregon, have successfully permitted full-time virtual school students to take state tests remotely, demonstrating the feasibility and effectiveness of this approach.

Beginning in the 2023-24 school year, Arkansas, Kansas, and West Virginia will also offer remote proctoring options, and Missouri is piloting remote proctoring with a subset of virtual students. Remote proctoring is a widely accepted and proven method used for several other high-stakes tests, including the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT), College Level Examination Program (CLEP), Praxis teaching certification exams, GED, and GRE exams.

Additionally, after further discussions with interested parties following the passage of SB168 from the Senate, the college entrance exams were inadvertently captured in the language. We have suggested clarifying language that removes the college entrance exams from the being required to remote proctor but allows them to be should the ACT and SAT make remote proctor an option in the future.

In conclusion, the implementation of remote proctoring for state testing is a crucial step towards ensuring that full-time virtual school students in Ohio have equitable access to quality education. It addresses the significant challenges and hardships we face and allows for a fair and secure testing environment. I urge the Ohio House Primary & Secondary Education Committee to consider and support the amendment to SB 168 as well as its passage to allow remote testing services for virtual school students to enhance the educational experience for all Ohio students.

Thank you for your time and careful consideration. I would be happy to take any questions that committee may have.