



**Ohio 8 Coalition Interested Party Testimony
Joint Education Oversight Committee**

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Chairman Cupp, Ranking Member Sykes, and the members of the Joint Education Oversight Committee. On behalf of the Ohio 8 Coalition I appreciate the opportunity to share with you our testimony on the state's Every Student Succeeds implementation plan. My name is Adrian Allison and I am the Superintendent of the Canton City School District Superintendent and Co-chair of The Ohio 8 Coalition.

The Ohio 8 Coalition districts serve nearly 200,000 students, more than 11% of the state's total student population. We hope that our testimony today will encourage you to leverage the knowledge and expertise of our Coalition to ensure there is meaningful change to policy that impacts our teachers, students, and administrators. In that vein, The Ohio 8 Coalition has the following strategic and tactical recommendations that we believe deserve consideration to craft policy solutions that are sustainable for the long-term.

One of the foundational propositions of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which replaced No Child Left Behind (NCLB) at the end of 2015, was the intent to give states and local school districts more control over how learning takes place and how performance is measured in their state, districts, and schools. This philosophical shift away from federal control creates many opportunities for states and local education agencies to engage in meaningful collaboration, informed by local context, about the best ways to support students, educators, and schools.

While there are a few bright spots in the implementation plan proposed by ODE, such as the improvements related to English Learner identification and accountability, The Ohio 8 Coalition is concerned that the unique opportunities afforded under ESSA were largely ignored in deference to the state's existing approach under NCLB.

From the Ohio 8 districts' perspective, the opportunities presented through ESSA give us the chance to work side by side with the Department to address the unique challenges faced by urban districts and opens the door to creating a more equitable education system that meets the needs of every student. Specifically, re-examining the state's accountability system, including the amount of state testing and how the state measures growth, determining a meaningful, transparent and accurate means of identifying the state's lowest 5% of schools, and aligning school improvement entrance criteria with exit criteria. Instead, the current draft plan by ODE relies on the existing system and decades-long approach of top down state control.

Reexamining the State's Accountability System

The Ohio 8 Coalition believes that Ohio's current value added measurement is broken and the measurement and the application of value added is completely inadequate relative to its original purpose. As a result, there must be a meaningful and comprehensive statewide conversation around a measure that accurately reflects student growth and performance. The measure cannot rely on the K-12 system to resolve all issues related to the non-academic needs of students, many of which directly affect student achievement. Value added has failed as a measurement due to the following:

- Value added is no longer used for its original intention, which was to measure the growth of a student in one academic year.
- The measure can and should directly control for demographics, but it is not being used in that way.
- Value added is supposed to yield consistent results but due to the inconsistent application the results at district and school levels are inconsistent.
- Additionally, The Ohio 8 Coalition Teacher Union Presidents believe that value added is now being used to evaluate and measure teacher performance even though it was not built to address that issue. The Ohio 8 Coalition Teacher Union Presidents strongly believe that value added, should not be used to evaluate teachers.

The passage of ESSA and the drafting of a state plan was a prime opportunity for Ohio to reexamine this critical component of the accountability system. Instead, ODE's plan continues to rely on it despite acknowledging some of these critical deficiencies.

The most often heard feedback from stakeholders about Ohio's accountability system is the amounts of testing students are subjected to. Indeed, this legislature passed House Bill 3 that contained provisions to limit the amount of testing occurring in schools. While this conversation is complex, it should not be ignored for a later time, but instead should be integrated into the state's overall education plan required by ESSA.

Creating Authentic School Improvement

Unlike in the past, local schools and districts have the opportunity under ESSA to develop customized improvement plans that support the challenges faced by their students and community. ESSA recognizes that there is a local context for challenges schools and districts encounter and that the best method to address these challenges is to create solutions within the specific **local** context, with support from the state.

Two components of the state's plan that fail to embrace this opportunity is the state's identification and exit criteria of the state's lowest performing 5% of schools and the state's proposed continuum of support. The Ohio 8 Coalition does not oppose the concept of the state supporting districts and schools that are in need of improvement. But, the state's plan continues to over-rely on the flawed, complex report card measures to determine how support is initiated and ended. There are several critical consequences of continued use of the current report card system: First, the report card results have proven to be confusing to parents, educators and community members. For example, one year a district will receive an "A" on a

measure. The next year, while continuing to use and improve on the same instructional strategies that resulted in the “A” the previous year, the district receives an “F” on the same measure. This scenario is common for Ohio 8 districts.

Moreover, several analysis of the state report card system has concluded that the report card outcomes (grades) are highly correlated with the economic status of the district or school. In other words, districts and schools with high poverty and other high incidences of academic and non-academic barriers to learning, including all of the Ohio 8 Coalition schools, are more likely to receive the lowest grades on the state’s report card. The report card results are not student-focused, equitable, transparent or stable. Yet, under the state’s plan, this is how the state’s lowest-performing 5% of schools and continuum of support will be determined.

What’s worst is that the state’s entrance and exit criteria are misaligned which could lead to more and more schools entering comprehensive support without a realistic opportunity to exit. The more schools identified for support, the more difficulty both the state and the districts will have to support these schools. Further, the exit criteria ensure that once a school is targeted for improvement, they will likely never be removed from that status.

The Ohio 8 Coalition is concerned that the state’s proposed approach maintains an identification method that prevents educators, parents, community members, and schools from understanding where they need to focus improvement efforts to improve outcomes for students.

The Ohio 8 Coalition has drafted a detailed recommendation plan to address these and other concerns with the state’s proposed plan. In the interest of time, I will not fully address the content of these recommendations, but you have them in front of you and we are willing to discuss them with you at your convenience.

Overall, The Ohio 8 Coalition views the current state implementation plan as a missed opportunity. The good news is we still have plenty of time to get it right. While the state is currently focused on an April submission date for the plan, the federal government also affords states the opportunity to submit in September. Taking advantage of this later opportunity will ensure that Ohio’s efforts under ESSA include meaningful changes to Ohio’s K-12 system to best support the needs of all students.

Thank you for the opportunity to share these recommendations. We look forward to continuing to help in any way we can as the ESSA process continues.

[The Ohio 8 Coalition](#) is a strategic alliance composed of the superintendents and teacher union presidents from Ohio’s eight urban school districts – Akron, Canton, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Toledo and Youngstown. The Ohio 8 Coalition’s mission is to work with policy makers to improve academic performance, increase graduation rates and close the achievement gap for urban children throughout Ohio. The Coalition carries out its mission by working closely with legislators, educators, parents, labor and community officials. The Coalition brings a shared administrator-teacher voice to help shape state education policy.