

**Cleveland Metropolitan School District Interested Party Testimony  
Joint Education Oversight Committee**

Michele Pomerantz, Policy and Labor Liaison  
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March 9, 2017

Chairman Cupp, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the Joint Education Oversight Committee. On behalf of the Cleveland Metropolitan Schools, CEO Eric Gordon, we appreciate the opportunity to share with you our testimony on the state's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) implementation plan. My name is Michele Pomerantz, education policy liaison to the CEO along with my colleague, Dr. D'Amico, Executive Director of School Performance. Dr. D'Amico and I have worked for nine months with members of CMSD including CEO, Eric Gordon to review each section of the federal legislation – deciphering its opportunities and shortfalls. We were acutely aware that ESSA would be a top priority for the CEO and our Chiefs at CMSD, since its impact will be felt by all Ohio families for generations to come.

The Cleveland Metropolitan School District envisions an educational system that ensures every child the opportunity to attend a high-quality school and provides every neighborhood has a multitude of great schools for families to choose. We continue to implement the reforms made possible by the Cleveland Plan, Cleveland's proposal for transforming schools – and the district is showing significant progress.

These gains include increasing our graduation rate by 17% in the past six years and yielding the highest graduation rate in CMSD history. We have also increased enrollment for the first time in decades. Recently we passed two operating levies as well as a facilities levy demonstrating that tax payers and families have regained public trust and feel that CMSD, through the efforts of the Cleveland Plan are moving in the right direction. CMSD is one of only three districts in the nation to improve on all four reading and math tests per the National Assessment of Educational Progress. Our High School students have shown a 10% decrease in college remediation rates and CMSD has decreased chronic truancy by 6.9% last school's year. We have expanded quality preschool by adding 1200 high quality rated seats that exemplify 80% of these children are Kindergarten-ready.

Lastly and something we are most proud of is a report in the Cleveland Plain Dealer that CMSD is the 15th highest improving school district in the state of Ohio.

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These gains are not coincidental but due to our educators utilizing the tools legislators and the Governor gave us in 2012.

We believe that ESSA represents a new opportunity to craft a more equitable education system, one which compliments the investments we've made through the Cleveland Plan, and meets the needs of all Ohio students. Yet our review of the state plan reveals too many reiterations of No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). ESSA is an urban education bill and targeting of the lowest performing 5% of schools will have a magnified impact not just on minority children but all children in poverty, rural or urban. We fear the state's current plan represents a roll back from the Cleveland Plan legislation and could significantly hamper future gains.

Accountability measures and the State Report Card must recognize proficiency *and* growth. Districts that have greatly improved in one area but not necessarily meeting the proficiency goal should be recognized. Likewise, educator effectiveness and equity must reflect a teacher's impact through student outcomes more significantly. We cannot accept the contrast between consistently high evaluation scores for teachers and stagnant student achievement.

It is for these reasons and others provided that compel us to request a later submission deadline. The September deadline can and should be used to develop workgroups to examine solutions to support student success.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. We look forward to continued collaboration around all education policies and are happy to answer any questions you may have.