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ESSA reauthorization grants states much-needed flexibility to shape and mold their own public education futures. While I welcome and am grateful for the Ohio Department of Education's willingness to hold many meetings around the state about this, I am growing increasingly concerned that just a few folks at ODE are really shaping this rather than the people of Ohio. One can see this disconnect with the testing provisions, which under the reauthorization would allow us to lop off several of the tests with which we currently burden our children.

However, in the draft revision from ODE, the same number of 30-odd tests are included, with ODE's logic being (apparently) that they also heard those in the field want stability. I agree. Changing tests every year doesn't help anyone, least of all kids. But the one change I think most of us would unify around would be the idea to have *fewer* of the *same* test. Not the same of a *different* test. I would agree with many that keeping the minimum testing would free up human and capital resources to better meet the needs of students, which in an era of 27% monthly state revenue shortfalls, is critical.

Here are just a few of the results from the online survey that has been posted at ODE's website:

- 78% said greatest expectations for schools are preparing kids for the future, providing a safe, welcoming environment and preparing students to be good citizens. Only 8% said rigorous academics met that definition
- Only 15% of respondents felt that testing was best way to measure student success. Yet that's the **ONLY** way we do it currently
- Respondents overwhelmingly felt student growth was best school success measure, but a nearly equal percentage didn't understand how Ohio calculates it. That's a transparency issue.

I think the last, open-ended question really summarized the overall results nicely:

- Reduce emphasis on testing;
- Slow the rate of change and provide stability for the education system;
- Increase school funding;
- Maintain existing academic content standards;
- Improve parental and community engagement;
- Expand services for gifted students;
- Support for early childhood education; and
- Expand access to arts education.

I also think the letter-grade report card system has become unwieldy. There are now so many grades and so many calculations, they've essentially lost all meaning, though I think the underlying data they generate does add a great deal of transparency. Couple that with having 3 different tests in the last three years, and what is a member of a community supposed to do with a district or school that three years ago had an A in student growth but now has a D? Did they suddenly forget how to educate kids? Probably not. The A-F system never made sense to me as a



change anyway. Under the old system of Excellent-Academic Emergency, there were 5 categories too. Doing the grade conversion wasn't difficult. Excellent is an A, Emergency is an F.

Reducing subgroup sizes below 30 is also a problem – a problem we see with trying to assign student growth measures at the school room level. It is so volatile in small numbers that one year you can be named the best teacher in the district and the next year the worst (as has happened in other communities that have gone to student growth teacher measures). ESSA also gives us an opportunity to dispense with the well-meaning, but misguided policy of tying teacher success to student test scores. The evidence is pretty clear that these measures create far more problems than they solve. Even building and district management thinks this is not a good approach. It's not easy for me to say this because I was the legislator who brought the concept to Ohio when I inserted into 2009's House Bill 1 a provision for the Educator Standards Board to develop at least a partially test-based accountability system for teachers.

Any ESSA plan should also include more robust investments in Early Childhood Education and wraparound services. The evidence is clear and overwhelming that high-quality early childhood experiences and wraparound services deliver huge benefits for relatively few investments. Committing the state to a more active investment in them, along the lines of Oklahoma's universal preschool program, should be a top priority of state policymakers.

Of course, this all mostly can be solved with an adequate and equitable education funding system that accurately calculates and appropriately funds kids in all schools. But that is a whole other discussion.

These are just a few of my thoughts. A would welcome any questions from the committee.