



**House Primary and Secondary Education Committee
House Bill 67 Testimony
Buckeye Association of School Administrators
Ohio Association of School Business Officials
Ohio School Boards Association
Ohio Association of Elementary School Administrators
Ohio Association of Secondary School Administrators
Alliance for High Quality Education
February 18, 2021**

Good morning, Chair Manning, Vice Chair Bird, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today regarding House Bill (HB) 67. My name is Kevin Miller with the Buckeye Association of School Administrators. Joining me for this testimony and in answering your questions is Katie Johnson with the Ohio Association of School Business Officials, Jennifer Hogue of the Ohio School Boards Association, Barbara Shaner, representing the Ohio Association of Elementary School Administrators and the Ohio Association of Secondary School Administrators, and Tony Podojil from the Alliance for High Quality Education. Our organizations represent public school district superintendents, treasurers/CFOs, business managers and other school business officials, boards of education, and elementary and high school principals from around the state.

On behalf of our members, we begin by thanking Representatives Koehler and Bird for sponsoring HB 67. We appreciate their responsiveness to the school district leaders in their own legislative districts who have joined educators across the state in requesting needed assessment flexibility for students and school districts as the current global pandemic persists.

HB 67 provides flexibility for schools in the administration of Ohio's state-required achievement tests. The bill requires the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) to request a waiver from the United States Secretary of Education for federally required tests. It expressly states that if a waiver is not granted, schools would be required to administer only those assessments required under federal law. Some have expressed concern that if a waiver is not currently available, it is superfluous for ODE to request the waiver. However, we are aware that other states are requesting waivers and we believe Ohio should join them in this effort.

While some school districts have continued with in-person learning throughout the pandemic, many have utilized hybrid or remote learning as options better suited to their students and communities. Even those districts practicing in-person learning have experienced challenges during the pandemic, including some students utilizing a remote learning option or students needing to quarantine because of exposure.

We have heard from the members of our associations that time spent on preparing for and administering assessments during this school year will not be a productive use of the time educators have with students. Rather, they want to spend that time helping students overcome learning loss and continuing to establish a productive learning environment.

Even while we are asking for flexibility in the current school year on achievement assessments, we would be remiss if we did not point out that required diagnostic assessments would not be waived. Also, educators are constantly assessing student progress and evaluating which students may need additional help. HB 67 will not remove these practices. We believe that the diagnostic assessment is the best measure to show the classroom teacher, principal and parents where students are on their academic journey. These diagnostic assessments are used to inform instruction for each student.

It is the considered view of many educators that results from assessments in the current school year will not be useful for accountability purposes, nor will those assessments be useful to inform instruction and address learning loss. Also, it seems likely those results will be highly predictable based on student and community demographics.

Therefore, the provisions in HB 67 will serve to ease the concerns of many educators and school leaders while at the same time, allowing districts to administer the assessments if they so choose. As you know, every school district and community is different, and HB 67 allows each the flexibility to do what is best for their students when it comes to administering the achievement assessments.

We ask the committee to consider some additional provisions for HB 67:

- Provide local control in determining if a student is on track to graduate as the legislature permitted in the previous school year. Seniors who have met course requirements and other local graduation requirements should not be prohibited from graduating.
- As districts are already planning for the coming school year, extend the current flexibility for remote learning into the 2021-2022 school year. Some parents will still be reluctant to allow their students to attend in-person learning due to the health conditions of the child or of a family member. In addition, districts will most likely need to continue using remote learning as an option for students in quarantine. School districts will need to continue to offer remote learning as an option for delivery of instruction.
- If school districts either choose to administer waived achievement assessments, and/or a federal waiver is not granted, provide relief for those students unable to take the assessments as was granted for the fall assessments during the current school year under HB 404.

These provisions would provide additional flexibility for students and schools as they continue to navigate the circumstances of the pandemic.

As many of you have expressed, school leaders, classroom teachers and other education professionals have excelled in their efforts to engage students and promote continued learning during these troubling times. We urge you to continue with that recognition by affording them the trust necessary to successfully meet the needs of their students. HB 67 represents the confidence we all have in the professionals charged with educating students, allowing them to make the important decisions about assessments.

We urge you to approve HB 67 along with our additional requests, permitting the education professionals in our schools to do what is best for students. This concludes our testimony. We will be happy to address your questions.