



Testimony to House Education Committee

November 20, 2013

Lori Ward, Superintendent, Dayton Public Schools

House Bill 193 Graduation Requirement Legislation

Chairman Stebelton, Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the House Education Committee, my name is Lori Ward. I am Superintendent of Dayton Public Schools (DPS) and am here today on behalf of my district and The Ohio 8 Coalition. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to share our general support of House Bill 193 and make some additional recommendations around the revision of Ohio's Graduation Requirements.

The Ohio 8 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.

The Ohio 8 Coalition generally supports the revisions made to Ohio's graduation requirements in HB 193. We applaud the efforts made by this bill to increase assessment options for districts and schools, and by extension, students. Our districts welcome increased assessment choice and we believe that this is a step in the right direction toward recognizing that one size does not fit all when it comes to serving the educational needs of students across Ohio.

We believe that while HB 193 makes great strides toward providing schools the ability to best serve their students there remains some room for improvement. In that vein, The Ohio 8 Coalition offers the following affirmations and recommendations:

- 1) The Ohio 8 Coalition supports the revised diploma requirements that include five end-of-course exams.
- 2) The Ohio 8 Coalition supports the revised graduation requirements and recommends the following two revisions to the diploma qualification conditions:

Recommendations:

- a) The Ohio 8 Coalition recommends that students qualify for a high school diploma based upon achieving a proficient (rather than a “remediation free”) score on both the end-of-course exams in English III and Algebra II.
 - b) The Ohio 8 Coalition recommends that the provision be amended so that students may attain a passing score on a nationally recognized job skills assessment or obtain an industry credential or state agency or board issued license for practice in a specific vocation. As the legislation stands a student would be required to achieve BOTH a passing score and an industry credential. We are concerned this may be cost prohibitive for some students as well as establish a higher standard than those imposed upon college bound students who must only meet an assessment requirement.
- 3) The Ohio 8 Coalition supports the provision in the bill that requires the State Board to hold at least three public hearings that allow public comment and testimony on proposed new or revised academic content standards.

Recommendation:

- a) Although the State Board holds regular hearings that allow for public feedback, the legislation seems to remain silent on the process of how they must advise the public of their work. We are suggesting that the State Board institute (advance and follow up) a notice system regarding activity and discussions, just as General Assembly does so that stakeholders can be fully aware of the activity around the significant work that is before all of us in the coming months.
 - b) The Ohio 8 Coalition supports the bill’s requirement that the State Board hold at least three public hearings and recommends that the legislation be amended to stipulate that notifications of public hearings must be announced on the State Board’s homepage, via email to all school district superintendents, and via email to any individual who requests notifications from the Director of the Office of State Board Relations.
- 4) The Ohio 8 Coalition supports the replacement of the Ohio Graduation Tests (OGT) beginning with students entering ninth grade on or after July 1, 2014. This deadline, however, will require a significant amount of work to be done by the State Board of Education (State Board) and members of the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) in a very short period of time- work that may not fall under the category of “new or revised academic content standards”. As a result, the Ohio 8 Coalition recommends the following:

Recommendations:

- a) In an effort to increase the level of stakeholder feedback in a limited amount of time the Ohio 8 Coalition recommends that the State Board and ODE be required to solicit feedback on all recommendations/decisions required of them under this

legislation in advance of final decisions from a variety of school district teachers and superintendents that are representative of rural, urban, and suburban districts. We recommend that the feedback be developed by requiring ODE and the State Board to hold at least three public meetings where public comment and testimony may be presented by members of the public.

- b) The Ohio 8 also recommends that notifications of public meetings must be announced on the State Board's homepage, via email to all school district superintendents, and via email to any individual who requests notifications from ODE.
 - c) The Ohio 8 also recommend that regular written updates on the status of the process of all State Board and ODE requirements under this legislation be clearly posted on the ODE and State Board website at least 48 hours in advance of meetings and within 7 days after meetings.
- 5) The Ohio 8 Coalition is concerned that, under this legislation, the State board would be the only entity responsible for compiling a list of the multiple "equivalent" assessments within 30 days of the bill's effective date.

Recommendation: The Ohio 8 Coalition recommends that the list of "equivalent" assessments should be compiled by a group of individuals including, the State Board, the Chair and Ranking members of the House and Senate Education Committees (or their designee), Superintendents (appointed by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction) representing a rural, urban, and suburban school district, and teachers (appointed by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction) representing a rural, urban, and suburban school district within 60 days of the bill's effective date.

- 6) The Ohio 8 Coalition understands that under this legislation, the State Board is required to determine and designate score ranges for the end of course and equivalent exams, determine the methods used to calculate cumulative performance scoring, determine the minimum cumulative performance score needed to earn a diploma, and develop corresponding score equivalents for all examinations by July 1, 2014.

Recommendation: The Ohio 8 Coalition recommends a committee be appointed to complete these duties. The committee should include, the State Board, the Chair and Ranking members of the House and Senate Education Committees (or their designee), three teachers (appointed by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction) representing a rural, urban, and suburban school district, and three superintendents (appointed by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction) representing a rural, urban, and suburban school district.

- 7) The Ohio 8 Coalition is concerned that the provision of the bill that would prohibit districts or schools from charging a student for assessments that are part of the college and workforce-ready assessment system- including end-of-course examinations, equivalent examinations, job skills assessment, or the nationally standardized

assessment that measures college and career readiness may result in an unintended financial burden for school districts, schools, or students.

Recommendation: The Ohio 8 Coalition recommends that this legislation be amended to ensure that the State shall be responsible for the costs associated with end of course exams, or equivalent tests replacing required end of course exams.

Conclusion

With some modifications, The Ohio 8 believes HB 193 provides students with a solid pathway to graduation. We appreciate all of the work that has gone into developing this legislation and thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and recommendations to further improve the bill. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.