



Testimony to House Education Committee

November 20, 2013

Lori Ward, Superintendent, Dayton Public Schools

HB 237 Common Core 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 speak in opposition of House Bill 237 and in support of Ohio implementing Common Core Standards.

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 stands opposed to HB 237. Implementing Common Core Standards is the right thing to do and we take this position for three simple reasons:

- 1) Allows Ohio to develop its own unique accountability model that is demanding and flexible when necessary, to respect the unique needs of the state and our school districts.
- 2) Provides a set of consistent, focused, rigorous expectations for all students: a necessary foundation for improving student achievement and ensuring students can compete in Ohio, the United States, and around the world.
- 3) Our eight districts have committed to and have made strategic investments in Common Core implementation for several years.

Our teachers and administrators are preparing to be responsive to changes in curricula, talking with parents, and engaging our peers around the country at conferences and seminars to make sure we are as prepared as possible for this important shift in standards and accountability.

It is at one such conference that we heard, interestingly enough, a football analogy that puts into perspective not only the standard that Common Core sets, but also the flexibility it provides to each and every district and community where it is implemented.

In the beginning of every football season here in Ohio and nationally, players, coaches, and supporters all strive for the Super Bowl or Championship as the ultimate goal for the season. The desire to reach and win that championship sets the standard for all teams involved. It is, however, up to each team to determine their own playbook or a plan that respects that team's strengths, weaknesses and what is best for them. The Common Core is the Super Bowl of academic standards, and with it each district will devise a strategy to meet the standard by establishing their own playbook or way of getting there. Initiated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and Council of Chief State School Officers, the Common Core supports state, school, and student efforts to become and remain competitive in our global economy.

The Ohio 8 Coalition believes that establishing such a high standard and providing this level of flexibility to each state and even further, each school district, is critical for Ohio and the nation. Moreover, the Ohio 8 Coalition believes that all students should have access to an education that will prepare them for the opportunities and challenges they will face after high school. Our student's success in today's global economy is often defined by their education up to and beyond high school. It is these global economies that not only spur comparisons from state to state but also draw contrasts about which American students can compete with others of their age around the world. Under our current system, each state sets its own standards. This has led to a nation with 50 sets of inconsistent standards (some high and some low), despite the fact that the expectations of colleges and employers in the United States in Math and English are nearly universal and are not bound by national or international borders.

In order to prepare Ohio students for the global reality they will encounter, it is critical that we set appropriate expectations and establish accountability. For this reason, we believe that the Common Core State Standards Initiative has produced K-12 standards in the subjects of Math and English that meet our expectations and help establish accountability not only for Ohio but also for our country.

The Common Core allows each state to develop its own unique accountability model that is demanding, and flexible when necessary, to ensure Ohio's unique needs are addressed. Higher standards will yield better outcomes and that is what we all want for our schools and it is what our children deserve.

The Common Core State Standards are an important opportunity to set consistent, focused, rigorous expectations for all students: a necessary foundation for improving student achievement and ensuring students can compete in Ohio, in the United States and if they choose, across the world.

Conclusion

While our Super Bowl analogy is utilized to illustrate a point—we all know it involves a game, but the Common Core Standard is not. As a result, The Ohio 8 Coalition strongly supports Ohio's adoption of the Common Core Standards Initiative and urges that you reject HB 237. As Members of this Committee, you have a tremendous responsibility before you. The Ohio 8 is here to help in any way we can. I want to thank this Committee for giving me the opportunity to speak and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.