



WRITTEN Testimony to House Education Committee

Substitute Senate Bill 19 – Opponent

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Chairwoman Arthur, Vice Chair Odisio, Ranking Member Brennan, and members of the House Education Committee, my name is Jeff Talbert. I am the Co-Chair of The Ohio 8 Coalition and the Superintendent of Canton City Schools. I appreciate the chance to submit testimony on behalf of our Coalition as an Opponent to Substitute Senate Bill 19. The Ohio 8 is a strategic alliance composed of the superintendents and teacher union presidents from the following Ohio urban school districts – ***Akron, Canton, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Lorain, Toledo, and Youngstown.***

Positive Amendments

The following provisions are positive developments within Substitute Bill 19:

1. Removal of individual Math Intervention and Improvement Plans (MIMPS);
2. Removal of mandating a single statewide software system (EMIS); and
3. Inclusion of multiple assessment vendors.

Ongoing Concerns

1. Selective application to traditional public schools only

If this bill seeks to improve statewide math literacy among students then why would it not apply to all students? Exempting private, parochial, charter, and classical education students does not help address statewide math literacy and it a glaring omission in this legislation.

2. Required district wide math improvement plans

This bill mandates that school districts develop a math improvement plan to address the performance of students in buildings. Many of the Ohio 8 Coalition school districts already have district wide academic improvement strategies. If an existing improvement strategy is already in place, districts should be exempt from this provision.

3. Required additional testing for new Educators

While requiring individuals who teach math to complete additional content-based testing for licensure may appear reasonable at first glance, we urge the Committee to reconsider imposing yet another barrier for prospective educators. Standardized test performance is not a reliable indicator of an individual's ability to teach or the quality of their instruction. As evidenced by student assessment outcomes, standardized tests often measure skills that do not fully align with real-world application or effective pedagogy. Moreover, recruiting qualified math educators is

already a significant challenge across many districts. Introducing additional hurdles will likely exacerbate these recruitment difficulties and contribute to further shortages in an already strained talent pipeline.

4. Education Management Information System (EMIS) “minimum requirements” mandate

The substitute bill requires that all school districts meet minimum standards for their EMIS systems. The bill, however, does not identify or define those minimum standards. This provision needs additional deliberation and discussion and should be removed as it can only cause more confusion for school districts.

5. Implementation for 2027-2028 school year

Requiring and being ready to implement for various components of this bill by the 2027-2028 school year is an unrealistic mandate. There must be appropriate preparation and training of educators and staff; development of instructional materials by DEW; sufficient time for communication between DEW and school district administrators; and timely communication to parents regarding any changes to standards and expectations.

6. Conflicts with gifted and advanced learning policies

Proposed changes to automatically accelerate students who score “advanced” on standardized assessments conflict with existing district approaches to gifted education and do not align with Ohio’s mathematics learning standards. A single test score is not a reliable indicator of a student’s readiness to succeed in an advanced classroom setting. While the removal of automatic acceleration for students who score “accomplished” is a positive step, the same concern remains for those scoring “advanced.” Additionally, although the inclusion of a parental opt-out provision is appreciated, making acceleration the default places a significant administrative burden on school districts to secure and verify exemptions. A more effective and family-centered approach would be to require an opt-in process, ensuring that acceleration decisions are intentional, collaborative, and based on a broader understanding of each student’s readiness.

7. Unfunded mandates

Requires mandates that will absorb significant time, training, and ongoing professional development without providing the funding necessary to implement such mandates effectively.

8. Proper public deliberation

For proposed changes to the Ohio Revised Code of this magnitude, the Ohio 8 Coalition respectfully states for the record that the time allotted to review Substitute Senate Bill 19 has been insufficient. The substitute bill was released approximately 24 hours before the start of committee proceedings—coinciding with the testimony submission deadline. This compressed timeline did not provide the K–12 education community with a meaningful opportunity to thoroughly review a 125-page piece of legislation or to offer thoughtful, informed feedback. As a result, this process has limited meaningful stakeholder engagement and raises significant concerns about the adequacy of the deliberative process.