



February 27, 2015

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Questions?

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Senate Education Committee Passes Student “Safe Harbor” Legislation (HB 7)

House Bill 7 was unanimously passed by the Senate Education Committee this week. The bill had been approved unanimously by the Ohio House. The OEA supports House Bill 7 (R-Buchy), which contains student “safe harbor” provisions related to state assessments and also provides school districts “safe harbor” from a funding penalty if a student does not take all of the assessments required by the state.

House Bill 7 would provide students “safe harbor” from scores on certain state assessments taken in the 2014-15 school year. These tests include the achievement assessments for grades 3-8 and the end-of-course exams for grades 9-12, which could not be used as a factor in high-stakes decisions for such things as grade promotion, retention, or the granting of course credit for the 2014-15 school year. Providing students this “safe harbor” will help ensure that the implementation of Ohio’s New Learning Standards and related assessments do not unfairly impact students during this transition period.

House Bill 7 also establishes more flexibility to retake the grades 9-12 end-of-course exams, which could provide some students the extra opportunity they need to graduate under the End of Course Exam pathway for a high school diploma. Further, the flexibility to retake an exam if a student misses a testing date may limit some of the negative consequences for students and school districts if a student fails to take a state assessment. The Ohio Department of Education would be required to promulgate rules that provide school



districts and students more detailed guidelines on the implementation of this testing flexibility.

The Senate Education Committee accepted an important amendment, offered by Sen. Gayle Manning (R-North Ridgeville), regarding a “safe harbor” for school funding. The amendment ensures that schools will not lose state per-pupil funding for a student who does not take all of the required state assessments in the 2014-15 school year. Under current law, a school district may not include, for funding purposes, any student who did not take all of the required statewide tests during the previous school year, unless the student was granted a waiver for good cause by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction.