

Chair Blessing and Members of the Committee,

My name is Dan Heintz, and I am honored and grateful to be here with you today in support of House Bill 239, the Testing Reduction Act. I speak to you today in a number of capacities. I am a member of the Cleveland Heights - University Heights Board of Education. I am also a teacher in the Chardon Local Schools, where I teach American History at Chardon High School. Finally, I speak to you as the parent of a soon to be Junior at Cleveland Heights High. As you can see, testing in Ohio impacts my public life, my professional life, and my personal life as well.

Ladies and gentlemen, I'm not going to talk much about reducing the number of State-Mandated tests to the Federal minimum level. The dramatic drop in Ohio's rank when it comes to public education that has occurred simultaneous to the expansion of state testing requirements speaks for itself. The evidence is clear, and I am confident in your sincerity to solve it.

Instead, I will focus my brief time on a few areas of the bill which may not be receiving the attention they deserve. These are: establishing a work group to monitor and make recommendations regarding district-mandated tests, requiring school districts to annually pass a resolution if they decide to go beyond testing limits, and directing the ODE to report the amount of time a district spends on both state-mandated as well locally-mandated tests. These are critical issues, and Ohio's school children need us to do better.

As we all know, there is a great deal of weight associated with our state mandated tests. Students, teachers, schools and districts are all evaluated by how our students perform. These consequences have motivated a phenomenon whereby students are regularly subjected to a series of district-mandated tests throughout the year to see how they are progressing toward success on the state tests. District mandated tests became such a burden on our Kindergarten teachers that they came *en masse* to a Board meeting, where nearly a dozen of them used the public hearing portion of our agenda to speak to us. Each of them explained how difficult it had become to plan, implement and evaluate connected, cohesive units of instruction and fulfil the ever-growing list of district mandated tests.

Ladies and gentlemen let me tell you, when a dozen Kindergarten teachers come to a Board meeting to advocate for their kids, you listen. When we listened, what we learned is that the classroom environment created by these district mandated tests was unacceptable, and we needed to act. As a result, the Board of Education directed our administrative team to work with our professional teaching staff to streamline the number of tests administered.

By requiring local school districts to empanel a work group of parents, teachers and administrators to both evaluate and seek ways to reduce district required tests, HB 239 will provide a systemic solution for many of the problems faced in classrooms throughout the Buckeye state.

Requiring each Board of Education to annually pass a resolution if they wish to exceed testing limits, forces us to have a meaningful discussion about the amount of instructional time we spend on testing, while allowing each community to establish their own standards. This would provide an elegant way for Ohio to balance the state's appropriate oversight of public education, while recognizing the importance of each local school district's appropriate expression of home rule.

We have all heard Tip O'Neill's reminder that "all politics is local." By requiring the ODE to report the amount of time each school district's children spend on state-mandated, as well as locally-mandated testing, HB 239 provides our citizens, taxpayers, constituents another important data point to judge whether or not our leadership is reflecting their wishes for the education of our children.

I thank you for your time this afternoon, and earnestly hope that you will support HB 239.