

Opponent testimony for HB 529  
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To Chair Manning, Vice Chair Bird, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide opponent testimony on House Bill 529.

My name is Derek Burtch and I am here in my capacity as a teacher. I have just finished my 14th year teaching in the state of Ohio having spent six years at North Union High School in Richwood, seven years at Olentangy Liberty High School in Powell, and am currently teaching at Olentangy High School in Lewis Center.

This proposal is unrealistic. The deadlines and tasks put forth are clearly written by someone at least one or two jobs removed from the classroom. The mandated date of July 1 put forth in this bill to ensure that districts have syllabi, class materials, assignments, and anything happening or used in a classroom within the district for an entire year is untenable for multiple reasons. Many districts don't end school until mid-June which leaves these teachers with around two weeks to plan and upload an entire school year. Apart from adding to the numerous bureaucratic tasks that have to be performed by teachers throughout the year (gifted training, dyslexia training for intervention specialists on top of their IEP writing, IPDP writing, airborne pathogen training and other online learning modules, there's more but I'll get back to the sentence), this excessive amount of predetermined and rigid lessons and materials does not align with the OTES rubric:

- "Teacher routinely promotes opportunities for students to actively take part in developing goals toward mastery, and students are responsible for deciding how to demonstrate their learning. Instructional strategies, pacing and resources are differentiated to make the lesson accessible and challenging for all students, while supporting the various learning needs of individual students."
- "The teacher analyzes data trends and patterns to measure targeted student learning, anticipate learning obstacles, modify instruction and differentiate to meet individual student needs."
- "The teacher's instructional plan incorporates activities, assessments and resources, including available technology, that align with student needs, school and district priorities, and Ohio's Learning Standards."

With the emphasis on meeting student needs throughout the year, it would almost be impossible to meet these examples of an "accomplished" rating being locked into set assignments and materials. Part of being a good teacher is recognizing what is working for a certain class or group of students and what isn't. Not everything we have planned works like we think it will, and the ability (and permission) to pivot is key. Meeting students where they are is key to student success whether it is differentiating instruction or reimagining your own idea and how it will work better for students to learn.

What happens to the plan posted online when a tragedy happens within the school community? Is there room in the plans due July 1 to address the loss of a student or staff member in the school? Does this plan make room for connecting learning to events in the world that students often have questions about? These caveats are important to student development as they try to transfer their learning outside of the classroom. Will there be emergency approval of materials given necessary learning circumstances?

The amount of exemptions and amendments necessary for every teacher in every school district in the state to get through the school year with this bill would make it nearly impossible to manage from the teachers' end and on the part of the state. I like the idea of transparency for what happens in the classroom, but this solution would only cause more of the mess that teachers are trying to clean up two years into this pandemic.