Joint Education Oversight Committee
ESSA Written Testimony
March 9, 2017

Submitted Jointly by a Collaborative of Educator Stakeholder Organizations:
Buckeye Association of School Administrators
Ohio Association of Elementary School Administrators
Ohio Association of School Business Officials
Ohio Association of Secondary School Administrators
Ohio Education Association
Ohio Federation of Teachers
Ohio Parent Teacher Association
Ohio School Boards Association

Chairman Cupp, Ranking Member Sykes, JEOC members, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony regarding the state's education plan for the new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) enacted in December 2015. Our collaborative of education stakeholders has been meeting regularly since early in 2016 around the possibilities for changes to Ohio's education system as a result of the new ESSA bill. While at times our collective memberships may have different policy agendas, we have found much commonality regarding Ohio's response to ESSA. We are also united in the hope that ESSA will translate to new opportunities for Ohio's school districts, students and staff.

As our organizations began to understand the areas addressed by ESSA and the priorities where we could all agree, we also reached out to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Paolo DeMaria, and his staff to offer assistance in the development of the state's ESSA plan and, of course, to provide input as to what our members hoped to see in the plan. We have been meeting with the Superintendent and Ohio Department of Education (ODE) staff on a somewhat regular basis since we first met last August.

However, like many other Ohioans, we and many of our members were disappointed when we saw the draft ESSA plan offered by ODE for public comment. After participating in regional stakeholder meetings and providing feedback online and in writing, we had expected a more comprehensive visionary ESSA plan. We thought the plan would reflect feedback from the field and also the Philanthropy Ohio white paper which summarized the public feedback received at the regional meetings.

We have since learned in meetings with ODE that there are differences in philosophy between ODE staff and our organizations about the purpose of the ESSA plan itself. To sum up the differences, our members hoped to see major changes to various aspects of Ohio's education system show up in the plan, while ODE describes the plan as a technical compliance document that needs to be filed with the federal government. Once filed, ODE asserts that Ohio can continue to work toward the changes our members are seeking by utilizing the framework of the plan that is submitted.

It is true that to achieve some of the changes we are all seeking, there will need to be some state legislative changes. Therefore, writing Ohio's ESSA plan in a way that provides for the major changes in the system we are seeking will not guarantee that all the changes will occur. Yet, the field is expecting a commitment to work toward that end. In our latest meeting with Superintendent DeMaria earlier this week, we expressed our wish for more detail in the plan and also a stronger commitment for future change.

Attached to this testimony is a list of specific items we asked to have included in the ESSA plan. We wanted you to see the kinds of things we are requesting in the hopes that it will help to move the conversation and the process along. We do not know what changes in the plan that ODE might make as a result of our input, but we are hopeful that our feedback and that of other groups will be reflected in the final version of the ESSA plan. We have resolved to continue meeting and working together and with ODE, pressing to take advantage of the opportunities offered by ESSA. We are also committed to working with you and the Ohio General Assembly to achieve the legislative changes to our education system that so many of our members are seeking.

If you have questions about any of this information, please do not hesitate to contact one of our organizations.

Specific Recommendations for Insertion in the State Technical Plan for ESSA
ESSA Collaborative (see organizations below)
Should be added to the current draft

Introductory Comments:
The following are specific details that our group believes should be included in the state's education plan submission to the USDOE. We hope to have a more thorough discussion about these requests with the State Superintendent and ODE staff very soon. **We continue to request that a state ESSA team and/or working group be established that includes representatives from our organizations and others where appropriate, to work through each topic.**

General comments:
We believe **c**ompetitive grants need to be eliminated from the plan. If schools need resources, they should get them. It is fine to say in the plan that "needs" would go through a review process before money is disseminated; however, the distribution of needed resources should not be dependent upon the ability of districts to write grant.

Particularly in the school improvement section of the plan, a description for how ODE will review, identify, and address equity in resources, should be included.

The plan needs a section for ongoing reflection and refinement. Though this is not specifically required, it is something that is recommended by the Council of Chief State School Officers in their strategic planning guide and something which we expect. This should include how the state can establish structures for ongoing stakeholder engagement. Representatives from our groups should be included as part of that engagement process.

Any sections where we recommend that workgroups be convened, we specifically request that each of our organizations make recommendations for participation. This does not preclude ODE from engaging other groups also.

Long Term Goals:
State Non-Academic Indicators – We do not support using chronic absenteeism- The non-academic indicator should measure opportunities for students in the school and district. A diverse workgroup including practitioners and parents should be convened to identify a measurement tool appropriate for each grade level to determine a school culture index.

Academic Assessments:
Reduce state assessments to the minimum required by the federal government, and continue to offer two opportunities for the administration of the third-grade reading assessment. Encourage and provide support for local assessment audits conducted by districts to determine appropriateness and quality of locally selected assessments.

Accountability, Support and Improvement for Schools:
- Remove A-F to rating system and instead use a "descriptive standards" based label. (Exceeds the Indicator, Meets the Indicator, Approaching the Indicator, and Does Not Meet the Indicator)
- Streamline the report card to the minimum reporting requirements of ESSA and make it more understandable. Include feedback from the parent focus groups a d surveys presented by the Ohio Standard Coalition.
- Provide an opportunity for schools and districts to add explanatory comments to the report card to provide additional context for the community.
- Academic Achievement- Remove the zero for untested students in the performance index calculation.

- Graduation Rate- Revise the method for deterring the graduation rate for students with disabilities when they elect to stay in school.
- Gap Closing- Complete the details of the gap closing measure before submission of the plan. This should be done in a workgroup with practitioners and parents.
- Prepared for Success-
    o Adjust indicator to account for career technical student success by including credit for industry credentials and follow-up surveys providing credit for all students in each category of the survey except for unemployed.
    o Give a full point in the base formula for students that complete nine credit hours of College Credit Plus rather than giving a 0.3 add-on for course completion.
    o Provide a 0.3 add-on for students who earn a passing score on the ASVAB and students who earn an associate's degree.
- K-3 literacy- Fix the measurement and rename to state its purpose more clearly. Base the measurement on the reading sub-scale scores only.
- N-size- the proposed new n-size of 15 should be phased in by reducing the number in increments of five each year until fully phased to 15 to allow districts to adapt and prepare for the new minimum subgroup size.

School Improvement
- Exit criteria should reflect the new designations on the report card
- Clearly define the entrance and exit criteria for schools in the watch category.
- Priority schools would be removed from the list if they receive a rating of approaching the indicator
- Provide support for wrap-around services and sharing of best practices to begin community learning centers in various regions around the state (grants/funding and training for coordinators).
- Add all the organizations in our group (see below) to the list of organizations contributing to the support for local school leaders.

Family Engagement
- Include a section of the plan that outlines the family and engagement.
- Encourage district's to increase more than 1% of Title I funding for family engagement. A key component in family engagement is providing for supportive professional learning on effective family engagement practices for teachers and school leaders.
- Provide resources and support for districts in methods, best practices and training for successful family engagement such as in the following areas:
    o Welcoming all Families
    o Communicating effectively
    o Supporting student success
    o Speaking up for every child
    o Sharing Power
    o Collaborating with the community
- Include specific strategies for engaging families with use of Title IV Part A funds (referenced in the current draft under the Supporting All Students section).

SUPPORTING EXCELLENT EDUCATORS

Educator Development, Retention, and Advancement
- P-16 stakeholders will work collaboratively to create more effective educator prep programs that more accurately reflect the current and future needs of the classroom.
- Insert the recommendations from the Educator Standards Board.
- Enact the strategies identified in the Ohio 2015 Teacher Equity Plan that identifies the root cause findings. Root causes that lead to poor teaching and learning conditions need to be addressed by enacting provisions from the Plan.

- Section 5.1B - The sections on Educator Workforce Diversity and Educator Shortage needs to include language that states how funds will be used to establish, expand, or improve pathways for paraprofessionals to earn a teacher certification. The current draft, under Educator Shortage, only refers to what **may** be done. This piece needs to include a defined strategy or at least describe how the department is going to obtain stakeholder recommendations.

Support for Educators
- Section 5.2i - This section should not focus on Value-Added data but rather on the use of high quality data to inform instruction. The section could also include professional learning in topics such as assessment literacy, formative assessments, content standards, family/community engagement, cultural literacy, behavior management techniques (restorative practices, SEL, etc.).
- Section 5.2ii says program design "could" include collaboration with various stakeholder groups. "Could" needs to be changed to "will." Since the section is about teacher leadership, this section should specifically mention collaborating with OFT and OEA. This section should also include something about training in labor/management collaboration.
- Something needs to be included about providing schools with the resources to support Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) programs, time for collaboration, and smaller class sizes to allow teachers to focus on students with the highest needs.

Educator Equity
- Enact the strategies identified in the Ohio 2015 Teacher Equity Plan that identifies the root cause findings. Root causes that lead to poor teaching and learning conditions need to be addressed by enacting provisions from the Plan.
- In Section 5.3, the chart needs to more accurately reflect the pages leading up to the chart. We would like to see a reference to ESPs as essential to the "whole child" development. Art, music, PE, Guidance Counselors, Librarians, School Psychologists, Speech and Hearing Therapists are essential to serving the needs of students. Schools, especially those serving are low-income and minority students, should be resourced properly to allow access to these services so that districts to not have to make critical decisions about which services to cut. Also, paraprofessionals should be acknowledged as an integral part of providing services to students at risk and as a valuable resource for providing the assistance that can retain high quality teachers in a district.
- Under the subtitle "Teaching and Learning Conditions" on page 83 of the current draft, it is critical to include Teacher Leadership Career Pathways. It is critical to allow teachers to take leadership roles in a variety of areas such as curriculum, mentoring, coaching, delivering professional learning and as PAR consultants. How can the state use funds to resource schools to do this?

Supporting All Students
- There should be added support for community learning centers and keeping resources for families in the school building or within close proximity to the school (as determined locally through family and community involvement).
- Focus on early literacy and childhood education -- providing needed support to students in their earliest years of learning rather than intensive interventions later in their educational career.
- Equity in resources serving our neediest learners in order to improve services to children and their families.
- Coordination among Head Start, early childhood initiatives (Birth-Age 8), and Title funding.
- Using best practices and educator professional development on the academic, social, and emotional needs of learners to ensure educational opportunities for the whole child.

- Include specific strategies for engaging families with use of Title IV Part A funds (referenced in the current draft).
- Insert on p. 89 bulleted section under "Ohio expects to take the following actions…"
    - Ohio will encourage the use of Title I funds to provide early education services in schools, or in preschool centers operated by the district, as well as in community-based preschool programs;
    - Ohio will encourage the use of Title II resources to equip elementary educators with the knowledge and skills required to effectively serve young learners;
    - Ohio will encourage and support alignment and collaboration birth through the third grade;
    - Ohio will strengthen and accelerate efforts by state pre-k, Head Start, child care, early childhood special education, home visitation, and grade level reading programs to eliminate opportunity and achievement gaps and improve outcomes for young children.

Respectfully submitted,

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