



## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STATE BOARD'S ACHIEVEMENT AND GRADUATION COMMITTEE REGARDING GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

November 15, 2018

President Elshoff, Vice President Hollister, and Members of the State of Ohio Board of Education, my name is Thomas Ash, Director of Governmental Relations for the Buckeye Association of School Administrators (BASA). Joining me today to offer support for the recommendations on graduation requirements from the Achievement and Graduation Committee are Jay Smith, Deputy Director of Legislative Services for the Ohio School Boards Association (OSBA), and Barbara Shaner, Advocacy Specialist for the Ohio Association of Secondary School Administrators (OASSA).

First of all, we commend the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the State Board for the convening of the Advisory Committee for Graduation Requirements, a group of 25 stakeholders who met multiple times over several months to address this important issue.

The proposal does not completely abandon high stakes testing as a path to a diploma. Actually, it expands those possibilities since those tests could now include the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) and college placement tests, such as ACCUPLACER. However, it does expand the opportunities for students to demonstrate what they know and are able to do through additional achievement opportunities.

We recognize the claim by some that this proposal dilutes the rigor that should be expected for the receipt of a high school diploma. However, we would offer two additional insights for adding other pathways to a diploma.

First, we have received reports from several Business Advisory Council meetings around Ohio that employers are concerned about the acquisition of job skills related to employment. These include such traits as punctual attendance on assigned work days, collaboration, critical thinking, and response to supervision.

We acknowledge the difficulty in measuring such so-called soft skills. However, we feel that they are embedded in such areas as supervised community service, apprenticeships, and the attainment of the OhioMeansJobs Readiness Seal.

Second, it is our opinion that the recommendations are consistent with Ohio's recently adopted Strategic Plan for Education 2019-2024, especially the domains of Leadership & Reasoning and of Social-Emotional Learning.

It seems to us that high school graduation, being the acquisition of skills and attitudes necessary for success, should reflect the vision outlined in a strategic plan developed by over 150 Ohio-based partners and reviewed by more than 1,350 Ohioans who had the opportunity to inform that plan.

We would add one additional, probably bold, suggestion, but it is based on history. In the past, whenever the State of Ohio has altered graduation requirements, it has always made them effective for the first class that entered ninth grade on July 1 of the year following the effective date of the change. That would make any permanent changes enacted between now and next June 30 applicable to the Class of 2023. We feel that it is appropriate that such changes should apply throughout a student's entire high school career.

Members of the State Board of Education, we commend you for your service and urge you to adopt the recommendations on graduation requirements as forwarded to you from the Achievement and Graduation Committee. We would be happy to respond to questions at the pleasure of the President.