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## **Senate Advisory Committee on Testing Recommends Improvements to State Tests**

COLUMBUS— The Senate Advisory Committee on Testing, appointed March 4th by Senate President [Keith Faber](#) (R-Celina), has completed its recommendations to improve state testing for next school year. The 30 member committee chaired by State Senator [Peggy Lehner](#) (R-Kettering) was created following the rocky rollout of the new state assessments in February. Teachers, parents, school leaders and policymakers serving on the committee were charged with providing advice to the Senate on how to improve state testing.

"This group could not have worked harder or more cooperatively," said Lehner. "They came together from all over the state with very diverse opinions about how Ohio should proceed with testing and basically ended up providing us with near unanimous recommendations. The fact that the group had nearly 100% attendance at all meetings reflects the commitment these people made to this effort. I expect that the Senate will pay close attention to their recommendations."

A written recommendation is currently being prepared. It will include the following components:

- The new twice a year administration of tests that occurred this winter and spring should be scaled back to once a year and the tests should be shortened. The testing window should be closer to the end of the school

year to provide more time for classroom instruction and less disruption in learning.

- Accommodations for children with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) must be improved and more clearly communicated to parents and schools. Training must be provided for intervention specialists and paraprofessionals who assist students with IEPs.
- Test results must be returned in a timely manner to benefit student instruction – although the group recognized that results from a writing test may not be able to be returned as quickly as the rest of the results.
- Transparency – test questions and answers must be made available within a reasonable timeframe after the administration of the tests to ensure the tests are aligned to Ohio’s learning standards and that questions are developmentally appropriate for grade level.
- Online testing is necessary and schools must plan to move in that direction; however, local schools must continue to have the option to administer paper/pencil tests for at least the next two school years. State funding for technology based on need should be considered.
- A single technology platform is preferable for next year’s tests. Improvements in technology are needed to ensure smooth administration of the tests.
- A “safe harbor” must be in place that allows results from this year’s tests to be reported but students, teachers or schools should not be penalized for results this year due to the transition to a new test and the concern that results may not accurately reflect a student’s achievement level.

- A comprehensive communications plan must be developed to provide parents, teachers, school leaders and the general public with clearer information about the tests.
- If the current vendors for state tests - PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College & Careers) for the math and English language arts assessments and AIR (American Institute for Research) for the science and social studies assessments will not make changes to the test for next year to accommodate these issues, the Ohio Department of Education must find a test vendor that will.

More information about the committee, including a list of the committee members, is available on the committee's website: <http://sact.ohiosenate.gov/>.

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**MAJORITY CAUCUS MEDIA CONTACT:**

Ashley Mosteller

Senate Majority Communications

Phone: (614) 466-8211

Email: [Ashley.Mosteller@OhioSenate.gov](mailto:Ashley.Mosteller@OhioSenate.gov)