



# Waynesfield-Goshen Local Schools

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## House Education and Career Readiness Committee

### Proponent Testimony on SB216 The Ohio Public School Deregulation Bill May 22, 2018

Good afternoon Chairman Benner, Vice Chair Slaby, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the committee.

My name is **Chris Pfister**, and I have been the superintendent of the **Waynesfield-Goshen (W-G)** Local School District in Auglaize County for the past seven years. Previously I served as superintendent of the Apollo Career Center, Lima, Ohio for 15 years. Our district was recognized as a top 50 district nationally for significant learning gain in reading, math, and science (NAEP like tests) and two years later for high quality career-technical programs. We were also number one in adult workforce training of the 57 centers in Ohio. Prior to that I served as Director of Adult Workforce at the Ohio Hi-Point Career Center for nine years and we were recognized as the leader in Ohio for customized training for business and industry; including helping develop programming at the Associate Development Center at Honda, Marysville, and administering the 2.1 million dollar training grant as part of the package to bring the East Liberty Plant (ELP) to Ohio. In one year we worked with 33 companies over a six county area as well as teaching short-term skill upgrade/retraining and long-term credential based classes on campus.

I worked for 35 years with many private sector people, CEO's, HR and Training Directors, in delivering numerous high impact technical skill, quality, and supervisory training programs. Involving thousands of employees, in meaningful training focused directly on the needs of the company. I was recruited for my current position. What became immediately clear to me in the K12 world was over regulation, overly complex systems, and a level of bureaucracy that created barriers to producing the results we all want.

At the request of Senator Huffman I formed a steering committee of eight superintendents and chair that committee. We then involved all 42 superintendents in Senate District 12. We now have coalitions from all over Ohio. Over 70 people testified in the Senate, teachers, administrators, and parents.

We greatly appreciate Senator Matt Huffman's sponsorship and the countless hours of work over the past year. We also greatly appreciate the hundreds of hours of work, and ultimate unanimous support by the Senate Education Committee, chaired by Senator Lehner; and the 33-0 vote of the Senate. Our SB216 Steering Committee also greatly appreciates the 300 plus superintendents actively involved and making contributions to the bill.

We are not afraid of accountability and are held accountable by our communities and our local elected board of education officials. Much of the legislation we are trying to deregulate is in reference to those laws that were initiated as a one size fits all action. Making the provisions in this deregulation bill optional would allow for some local control.

SB216 is a start to help change law, rule, or regulation that adds little value, takes a significant amount of time and money, and in numerous cases pulls focus away from mission. The first draft of the bill consisted of 23 different issues. After eight months of testimony, interested party meetings, consultation with numerous associations and groups there are 17 elements left and many have been modified. I would be happy to answer questions about any element of the bill. To highlight a few of the problems that we have faced in our district:

## **Teacher Licensure**

### **Full-Time Teacher Licensure**

The current version of teacher licensure is 90% State University Education Deans (SUED) language, 10% ODE, not the proposal supported by virtually all school districts in Ohio. Also almost 1,000 elected local board of education members supported the original bill though resolution.

I want the best teacher teaching the children. By code we have not been able to assign the most qualified teacher to teach the children. I am not asking to hire anyone off the street. Under code I already have the authority to hire a much less qualified person, a sub. I am asking for the authority to place an effective, proven licensed teacher working in my district for a class period or two outside of their license grade band or subject area. A few recent examples:

- Exemplary experienced Spanish teacher, licensed 7-12, full teaching load, agrees to do a 6<sup>th</sup> grade, one semester, exploration of the Spanish Language and Culture, at the request of parents and at no cost. Has to apply for a supplemental and enter college.
- 4-9 licensed science teacher, teaching STEM, CCP manufacturing process with Rhodes State, PLTW Pre-Engineering, Robotics, CAD/CAM, cannot teach a 10<sup>th</sup> grader. Asked for the 12 hour STEM license for grades 10-12; denied because he currently holds a license at grades 4-9, only a person with no license, with no teaching experience qualifies. This teacher applied for the supplemental and enrolled in coursework that will cost us \$6,000 over two years.

### **Long-term and Short-term Substitute Teachers**

The problem was a long term substitute could not teach longer than 5 days without a bachelor's degree and 18 semester hours in the subject. Since it is very rare to find such a sub, the sub was pulled out every five days, disrupting the educational process for the children. One month after the introduction of this bill, ODE changed the administrative rule to 60 days, disrupting the educational process less often; very helpful, we appreciate the change, but contend it would be better to not disrupt the educational process at all.

We are seeking a change to hold a bachelor's degree but to eliminate the subject area requirement. Quick example, if I have a sub that knows our school, our students, learning management system, and has 15 hours of math in his bachelor's degree and he is not qualified to sub more than 60 days. After 60 days there is no option...so do we drop Algebra I? Do we bring in a much less qualified person for the next 60 days? The rule creates a barrier to have the best person in front of students and codifies educational disruption.

### Third Grade Reading Test/Third Grade Reading Guarantee

Testing third grade students on-line on the computer is developmentally inappropriate and does not accurately assess our children's ability to read and write. The high stakes third grade English Language Arts test, covering many standards of literacy reading, informational reading, and writing, in a two day, high pressure time compressed setting is testing a young child's ability to navigate the technology, not their ability to read and write. I can give many examples; for one, when a young boy couldn't get his drop down menu to work he melted down and panicked, couldn't get back under control, and ultimately did not get enough points to be proficient (670 of 700) on the first test. Before the second test I told my EI principal to have him write his paragraphs out and then type it in (he was a "B" student that we knew could read and write), he said just not enough time. We understand it is easier to have all tests on-line, but we would prefer a much more accurate assessment of our children's ability to read and write.

We have no problem with on-line tests for grades 6-12 after our students have learned keyboarding (we teach at sixth grade when all students get their 1:1 Chromebook) and are more proficient at navigating the computer.

Interestingly, not long ago one of my two third grade teachers shared that her HS son just finished a grueling four hour ACT test, all paper and pencil, and then they and gave our little third graders a computer test that they have trouble navigating.

A parent that lives in the Wyoming district near Cincinnati (part of the 35 district Cincinnati Area coalition) provided testimony before the Senate Education Committee on giving districts the option of paper or on-line tests at third grade. Her graduate degrees are from Harvard. She is an engineer for a company in Cincinnati responsible for hiring engineers and shared that the argument that third graders need to take a test on-line because they need to know technology is just plain wrong. That she learned technology in high school. That we should be testing reading and writing and not the time pressured manipulation of a computer on a high stakes reading and writing test.

#### **In Closing:**

SB216 is just a start; there are many more issues that need to be addressed. For example our coalition supports HB591 on the State Report Card. Several submitted written testimony last week. We sincerely want to be helpful. No blame, solutions. So we can operate more efficiently, effectively, and produce meaningful results. Daily I receive the next assignment to do or a report to complete; or the most recent change in a rule that we will have to implement. It all takes time and money. Individually each may sound good, yet many are not necessary. When we accumulate so many tasks that are not directly related to our purpose we have lost sight of the important. We are pulling focus from core mission (educating children). We could be so much more effective if we could keep the focus on student learning. We would greatly appreciate your support of SB216.

**Thank you very much for your time and for the opportunity to offer brief remarks on issues important to our district.**