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Chairman Duffey, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee, thank you for hearing sponsor testimony for House Bill 217. Before I get into what this bill does, I would like to give a little background on how this bill came about.

My office had a meeting with Dr. Colette Dollarhide from THE Ohio State University last month. During our conversation, Dr. Dollarhide mentioned that the number of male, African American students accepted into OSU as freshmen was incredibly low – approximately 200 students, though we will ask Dr. Dollarhide to present before the committee at a later date to confirm. As you can imagine, the majority of those young men are attending tOSU on athletic scholarships. When I inquired to Dr. Dollarhide as to why this was so, one of her findings was that institutions of higher learning have a box on their application process that students must check to disclose whether they have been the recipient of some kind of disciplinary action during their time in primary and/or secondary education or not. In an article from the Ohio State University’s Kirwan Institute, it states that, “African American students are 3.5 times more likely to be suspended or expelled than their white peers”.¹ To Dr. Dollarhide and to myself the problem, though not easy to fix, could at least begin to be resolved by “banning the box”.

House Bill 217 bans the box. This bill will prohibit institutions of higher education from requiring prospective students to disclose disciplinary actions on their applications for admission. I feel that for students, having to check this box is unfair for two reasons. One, a student’s high school already sends a transcript to the prospective college on behalf of the student and such disciplinary action would already be contained in that form and two, the possibility for denying a student entrance into the university or college is much higher if that box is “checked”. I feel that this is prejudicial as checking that box is not an accurate reflection of the student’s current standing.

I would like to make it clear that this bill only deals with disciplinary actions dealt to students by their schools. For example, if a high school freshman is suspended for putting graffiti on the bathroom wall and then learns his or her lesson, he or she should not be punished when applying to colleges three

¹ Racial Disproportionality in School Discipline: Implicit Bias is Heavily Implicated.
<http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/racial-disproportionality-in-school-discipline-implicit-bias-is-heavily-implicated/>

years later, for such a juvenile mistake. This bill only bans the box that would make students disclose whether they have been the recipient of an in house suspension or expulsion by their school or schools.

It has come to my attention that the state legislature in Maryland, has tried to pass similar legislation but failed due to a gubernatorial veto. Maryland's bill, Senate Bill 543, tried to ban not just the box disclosing school based disciplinary action, but also criminal history as well.² My bill, House Bill 217, does not touch on criminal charges, sentences, prison time, etc. As chair of the Education and Career Readiness Committee, I take safety in our schools very seriously and want the same for our colleges and universities. Institutions of higher education should have the ability to know whether a prospective student has a criminal history or not. I do not believe, however, that colleges and universities should preemptively require a student, who essentially is a model student and in good standing with his or her school, to have to disclose a past suspension or expulsion, especially if those punishments were executed by the school and had no criminal repercussions.

The goal of this legislation is simple; to make the application and admission processes as equal for all students as possible. With more and more of our young people attending college than ever before, House Bill 217 will level the playing field and relieve some of the stress that comes with applying to college. Chairman Duffey, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to testify on House Bill 217. I am more than happy to take questions at this time.

² Maryland Governor Vetoes Ban the Box College-Application Bill.
<http://www.jurist.org/paperchase/2017/05/maryland-governor-vetos-college-application-bill.php>