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Committees:
Finance, Vice Chair
Finance, Primary and Secondary Education
Subcommittee
Education
Local Government, Public Safety,
and Veterans Affairs
Rules & Reference
Transportation, Commerce, and Workforce

Gayle L. Manning
Majority Whip
13th District

Chair Oelslager, Ranking Member Skindell, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you again for allowing us to testify today on SB 246.

My colleague did a wonderful job describing what this legislation does and the reasoning behind it. As someone who worked in a classroom setting as a teacher for 37 years, I have seen these issues play out firsthand. A child who has not eaten breakfast or dinner the night before, who could not sleep because her parents were up all night arguing, this child is not coming to school adequately prepared for the day. While many children experience this and come to school the following day without issue, some do not and as a result face disciplinary action. As my colleague noted, it does not make sense to punish a student with sending them back to a harmful environment.

Ask any teacher why they decided to go into the profession and you will be told that it was to make a difference, to enhance a child's life, and to make sure that that child leaves the classroom better poised for success than they were when they arrived. One of the most impactful moments as a teacher for me happened while I was leaving an event I had attended in the district. A woman came up to me and stated, "Mrs. Manning? Is that you?" While I did not immediately recognize the individual, it turned out that she had been a student of mine many years before. She told me that she recently graduated with a degree in a scientific field and that she decided she wanted to go into science because I had once commented that she was good at it. It truly hit me at that moment just how impactful the smallest actions can be and that those actions can make an immense difference in someone's life.

Using science as the example, we teach our students with lab projects because we know that hands-on experiences help children to learn. It is no surprise, then, that studies show students who are subjected to exclusionary discipline methods are significantly more likely to face degree completion, employment, and legal challenges later in life. We would not expect a child to miss out on their lab work and to still possess a robust knowledge of the concept at hand. Likewise we should not expect children to have improved behavior when our response is to simply have them miss out on the social interaction and learning opportunities that come with each school day. Our schools ought to be welcoming places, filled with teachers striving to make a difference in a child's life, and places that recognizes that what a non-violent, unruly child truly needs is PBIS interventions rather than additional time outside of the school in an environment that may have further deleterious effects on the student.

Our fantastic teachers here in Ohio do not have the opportunity to make a difference in such a child's life if the child is not in the classroom. This legislation will help equip our educators to be trauma-informed, to receive PBIS training if they do not already have it, and to be enabled to work with at-risk children so that their prospects for the future become brighter rather than dimmer as a result of their time in Ohio's education system.

Thank you again for allowing us to testify on this legislation and the impact that it can have on improving outcomes for Ohio's at-risk students. I am happy to answer any questions that the committee may have.