



Canton Professional Educators' Association
1327 Market Avenue, N.
Canton, Ohio 44714

2-20-2020: Conference Committee - Am. Sub. H. B. No. 9

Chair Jones and members of the Conference Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. My name is Spencer Geraghty. I am an Intervention Specialist with the Canton City School District. I am testifying as a member of the Canton Professional Educators' Association, an organization of nearly 750 teachers, guidance counselors, psychologists, nurses, and therapists.

On February 4th, the Associated Press hosted its annual legislative panel. Senate President Obhof, Minority Leader Yuko, House Speaker Larry Householder, and Minority Leader Sykes were available to answer questions. A video of the panel is available on the Ohio Channel [website](#).

In watching the video, I was struck by a few statements made by Speaker Householder. I would like to point out two of those statements, both direct quotes.

At 52 minutes and 53 seconds into the video, Speaker Householder made the following statement in regards to students and districts impacted by vouchers, "As long as those students were from Appalachia or from black schools, nobody cared. When all of the sudden there were 1,203 school districts on the board, on the list, some of them were some of your wealthiest suburbs in the state of Ohio, suddenly the alarms went off and we have to fix this."

I applaud the Speaker for addressing an elephant in the room. We cannot, and must not, be silent about issues as important as education for the next generation of Ohioans. His vocal leadership on this subject is increasingly needful in the Statehouse.

The House is on the right path, income-based vouchers do more to put families in need first, while not penalizing districts who are doing all they can to achieve. School districts are constantly navigating obstacles: poverty, truancy, homelessness, and levies. Throw in a less than adequate state report card and school districts have an extremely difficult task.

Furthermore, a state-funded voucher program, not adjustments and transfers out of a district's budget is much more palatable. I recently spoke with the Canton City School District's treasurer. He sent me a [document](#) that indicates, between fiscal year 2013 and 2019, Canton City Schools has transferred a little over 90 million dollars via open enrollment, community schools, and various scholarship programs offered by the state.

If you include the anticipated transfers for fiscal year 2020, the number rises from 90 to nearly 107 million. The average transfer amount from 2013 to anticipated costs in 2020 is about 13.3 million a year. School districts all across the state stare at a hole in their budget every year, yet are expected to meet a goal line that is obscure and unclear.

This leads to the second statement by Speaker Householder that made an impact on me. At seven minutes and 47 seconds into the video, the Speaker said, “Our real culprit, at the end of the day, is our grading system and our testing system in the state...its been used as a tool to penalize public schools...”

Once again, Speaker Householder is addressing an elephant in the room: a system that has been set up to represent public schools as failures. The Cleveland Plain Dealer, specifically reporter Rich Exner, does a great job compiling data related to school district income and district letter grades. As you can see in the linked [chart](#), there is a direct correlation between average median income and district report card letter grades; the higher the income the higher the grade, the lower the income the lower the grade.

Canton City Schools and colleagues at Toledo Public Schools have presented a report card proposal to various groups. I am happy to detail those meetings in further detail during the questioning period.

The proposal is simple: evaluate the whole measure of a school district while accounting for poverty, regardless of district typology. While state testing is certainly a part of the proposal, it is not the end all, be all.

Back to the report card, our proposal takes into account eight different strategies. These strategies are directly aligned to [Ohio's Strategic Plan for Education](#).

Strategies one through three address excellent educators and instructional practices: teacher/principal data and ratios of technology available for students.

Strategies four through six address standards, assessment, and accountability: opportunities in the arts, extracurricular activities, and achievement on state tests (general achievement, gap closing, and progress).

Strategy seven addresses student supports and school climate/culture: ratio of related service providers, PBIS implementation, discipline data, chronic absenteeism, and wrap-around services.

Strategies eight and nine address early learning and literacy: participation in four or five star rated pre-schools, K-2 literacy, and third-grade reading guarantee.

Strategy ten addresses high school success and postsecondary connections: graduation rate and growth, 9th-grade course passage, AP/Honors participation, and post-school outcomes.

Finally, the proposal replaces the A through F rating system with a continuum ranging from meeting targets to very limited progress towards targets receiving comprehensive supports.

When the report card is fixed, many of the problems related to primary and secondary education in Ohio will self correct. One thing we can all agree on, we want the best outcome for every student in Ohio.

Thank you for your attention to the incredibly important process of education. I am happy to answer any questions you have.

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