

**NIRAJ J. ANTANI**  
42<sup>ND</sup> DISTRICT

Joint Medicaid Oversight Committee

Special Committee on Rules

Vice Chair- Committee on Insurance

Committee on Health

Committee on Public Utilities

Committee on Aging & Long Term  
Care



**Ohio General Assembly**  
**House of Representatives**  
Columbus

**VERN RIFFE CENTER**  
77 SOUTH HIGH STREET, 11<sup>TH</sup>  
FLOOR  
COLUMBUS, OH 43215-6111

T: (614) 466-6504

F: (614) 719-6966

REP42@OHIOHOUSE.GOV

**Sponsor Testimony House Bill 23**  
**Primary and Secondary Education Committee**  
**February 19, 2019**

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Chairman Blessing, Vice-Chair Jones, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for allowing me to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 23. This bill would allow international students attending school in Ohio on an F-1 visa to participate in interscholastic athletics while they attend school in Ohio.

Ohio is fortunate to have students to come here from around the world to attend our public and private schools. Families from across the globe want to send their kids to Ohio to get the best education they can and to have a truly American high school experience.

However, students who come here from other countries on an F-1 visa don't really get the complete American high school experience because they are forbidden from playing sports by the Ohio High School Athletic Association. The OHSAA and its members (around 85% of which are public high schools, paid for by taxpayers) arbitrarily decided several years ago that some international students, like exchange students who are here for a year on a J-1 visa, may play sports, but others, who may be here for four years on an F-1 visa, may not participate unless they meet specific criteria that are not applicable to the vast majority of students who receive an F-1 visa.

In House Bill 49, the House and Senate approved an amendment that allows students with a F-1 visa attending a boarding school built before 2014 to participate in interscholastic athletics. House Bill 23 simply expands the purview of that amendment to include all students on an F-1 visa at all schools, both public and private. The bill will create an even playing field for all of Ohio's schools and will make our high schools more attractive to international families when they consider the education of their children. These same students would be more likely to go on and attend college in Ohio and perhaps even work here after they graduate. The ability to create a good first impression with these students and families will do nothing but benefit our state.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify as the sponsor of HB 23. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.