



Toledo Public Schools
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Proponent Testimony for HB 154, Christine Varwig, Toledo Public Schools Board of Education.

Chairman Blessing, Vice Chair Jones, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today regarding House Bill 154.

As a member of the Toledo Public Schools Board of Education, I urge you to pass HB 154. You will hear district statistics, opportunities and successes today from my colleague, Stephanie Eichenberg, as well as the challenges our students and district faces. The data presented today shows how we are succeeding even in the face of insurmountable challenges, sadly some brought on by our own state government.

While running for a second term for the TPS Board of Education, I had the great fortune to meet with my city's Chamber of Commerce to obtain their endorsement. Topics discussed during that meeting were the flawed State Report Card, the state's failure to properly fund our public schools, and HB 70's Academic Distress Commission. While we had a lively discussion, the questions I had for the chamber of commerce, and I propose to each of you here today..... Why do we think high stakes testing is beneficial? When has the state report card ever benefitted our community? And what do you think an Academic Distress Commission's economic impact would be on our city? I think my Chamber of Commerce appreciated those questions as I was proud to receive their endorsement.

So, I ask you.... what has the economic impact been on the cities where the Academic Distress Commission has taken over? Would you move to that community? Or start a business there? Or, how about this question...would you send your children to one of the public schools in that district? Take a moment and think about how the average person in those communities would answer those questions.

I urge you to consider the negative implications on those communities, including their economy. Please ask those communities about the impact.

As an example of economic impact in Toledo, Toledo Public Schools not only works with our Port Authority on economic development zones, but we also believe our Aerospace and Natural Science Academy of Toledo has the potential to be an economic driver for our local airport as well as urban agriculture in our region. Our ANSAT graduates have the potential to start their work lives making \$50,000 via airline partners. That is true economic impact.

HB 154 provides our state the opportunity to do the right thing. This is your chance to make a difference in communities across Ohio by abolishing the Academic Distress Commissions, that penalize school districts struggling under socio and economic issues. Some challenges beyond our control. We need to maintain local control. We need to be able to do our part to improve our community. As a locally elected public-school board, our focus is on student-centered decision making. And because of that, I urge a YES vote on HB 154.

Thank you.