

## **Testimony to the House Primary and Secondary Committee**

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and

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Chairman Blessing, Vice Chair Jones, Ranking Member Robinson and members of the House Primary and Secondary Committee, my name is Mary Lightbody. Thank you for allowing me to testify in support of House Bill 111.

Prior to starting in my current position in the College of Education at the Ohio State University in Newark, Ohio in 2007, I was a middle school science teacher in the Columbus City Schools, and then a gifted intervention specialist in the Westerville Schools. I have three grown children, all of whom graduated from Westerville North High School.

As a parent, and as former teacher and faculty member with over twenty-five years in K-12 classrooms, I know only too well how important the timely transfer of student records from one school or district to another can be to the smooth transition of the children who experience a change in schools. This is especially true for students who qualify for special education support at either end of the spectrum.

Let me speak first from my experience as a parent. In 1988, when my late husband and I moved to Westerville from Massachusetts, I was careful to bring copies of the school records with us, as we moved in the summer and I was not sure how long it might take for the school records for our two older children to be sent to our new school district in Ohio. As it happened the Westerville Schools were doing testing the second week after we arrived to identify students entering the fourth grade who might qualify for their full-time pull-out program for highly gifted students. Based upon the records I brought with me and shared with the principal at the elementary school the first week we arrived, the principal immediately requested official transcripts from Massachusetts, and invited our middle daughter (who had finished third grade in Massachusetts) to be tested for the gifted programming. Had the district not received her school records quickly, this invitation might not have extended to her. To our delight and surprise, she was accepted into the program, and that opportunity made the world of difference to her.

As a teacher, I experienced the challenges of a continuous stream of new students coming into and leaving my 8<sup>th</sup> grade science classroom in Columbus. The roster I received prior to the first day of school in the fall was very different from the roster I received at the beginning of the last grading period in the spring. Of the 180 students I taught in six class periods, many who finished the year with me had attended 3 or 4 different Columbus Middle Schools during the school year, often because of financial difficulties. Records for the students in my classes were transferred eventually, and I reviewed them when they arrived because the information they contain was useful.

It was critically important to know where the students had been enrolled previously, whether they had any identified special needs, and as much about them as our staff and teachers could

glean from their school records. When those records took weeks to arrive, my ability to help the students with their transitions was hampered significantly. I consulted and collaborated with other 8<sup>th</sup> grade and special education teachers when the records were slow to arrive, especially if there were students struggled to concentrate, read below grade level, had weak literacy skills, or seemed to have special needs. Sometimes the students or their parents would share that information, which helped me, but until the official records arrived our guidance counselor had little information to use in placing new students into the proper classes. One building where I taught for several years was also designated to have programming for English Language Learners. We were required to place ELL students in at least one regular class within two weeks of enrolling in our school, and often this was done when we had no records at all.

House Bill 111 is written to provide a time frame in which school records are to be transferred between schools when children move. Having transcripts and school records within five school days will allow staff in the new school district to properly identify students who have special education plans in place, those who have taken advanced classes, those who have participated in extracurricular activities, those who need immunization, etc. to receive a schedule that allows for the smoothest transition and the best academic outcomes possible. Sometimes it can be difficult for the school district the student is leaving to collect textbooks, technology that may have been issued, or library books but other measures should be used in these cases rather than delaying the transfer of the school records.

I note that the bill is written to stipulate that the five days apply when school is in session. This will allow districts more time to transfer the records in the summer months when many families move and on-duty district staff numbers are reduced.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this important piece of legislation. I would be happy to answer any questions the committee members may have.