



Toledo Public Schools  
Board of Education  
Educational Campus  
1609 N. Summit Street • Toledo, Ohio 43604

Stephanie Eichenberg  
Board President  
419-671-0550  
Fax 419-671-0082  
seichenb@tps.org

Testimony on HB 111 Transmit transfer student records within five school days  
Stephanie Eichenberg, Toledo Public Schools Board of Education

Chairman Jones, Vice Chair Manchester, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you briefly today regarding the transfer of student records. I'm Stephanie Eichenberg, President of the Toledo Public Schools Board of Education.

While I understand this bill may seem somewhat technical, I wanted to make sure your committee is aware of the negative impacts of schools holding records back for whatever reason they deem appropriate.

As I stand here right now, Toledo Public Schools has sixty-five 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade students for whom we are attempting to secure records so that we may credit the students with the classes they have already taken. Without the official transcript of the classes a student has completed, our district is unable to credit these students for their coursework. The net result of other districts not transmitting records is that we have some students who do not graduate on time, not because they've haven't taken the classes required, but because we cannot credit for them for work done at their prior school.

40% of the schools who have not transmitted records are private schools, 51% are other public school districts in Ohio and the final 9% of schools who have not transmitted records upon request are out of state. HB 111 would help us with 91% or 59 of the 65 students for whom we have incomplete records.

In nearly all these cases, schools are refusing to transmit records to pressure a family into paying some sort of fee owed to that school district. In order to assist these students in graduating, our administration is forced to inquire with each school or district and find out why records have not been released and then to report back to the students and their families, and frequently we help the family find ways to pay those fees if they cannot.

This past spring, TPS leaders scrambled to utilize our network of donors that we know of from the Toledo Public Schools Foundation to try to secure donations to help those students pay their prior tuition bills or overdue fees. To help you understand what this might look like for an individual student, last year we headed into graduation season with the full knowledge that two of our Seniors had attended a local private school on Ed-choice vouchers designed specifically for economically disadvantaged students and had not been able to pay the balance of their tuition for at least some of their first three years, arriving at our doorstep in their Senior year. Those private schools chose to not transmit the student records as way try to collect tuition from the families.

One young lady who had successfully completed the work needed according to the standards of the Ohio Department of Education had to sit in the audience of her graduation ceremony with her cap and gown in her hand, just in case she was notified of a donor check being delivered to her former school

on the day of her graduation ceremony. TPS ultimately was successful in finding a donor for that student, literally informing her of the success after her fellow graduates had processed into the ceremony, so she left her seat in the audience and joined her peers to walk across the stage and receive her diploma. For another student, he is currently working on credit recovery and continuing to attend classes in order to make-up 3 years of high school credits so he may eventually graduate. These students came to us from schools where I have no doubt they filled out a financial statement to be admitted, and the schools chose to admit them despite potential risks, but in the end the student was left holding the bag because the school was not right for their family financially. Punishing the student for a family's financial issues, where the school chose to continue carrying a student across several years of deficit, figuring that they would somehow find the funds, is extraordinarily cynical and so far from student centered it's appalling.

In addition to the lack of humanity displayed, when these students don't graduate, it impacts our metrics. As you are familiar, there are extraordinarily high stakes for districts connected to graduation rates, and for the 28 Seniors this year for whom we do not have records, we could experience a 2% decrease in overall graduation rate if we cannot help these 28 students resolve records related issues. For a district that has worked hard for 5 years and put it all on the line to claw our way to an 80% graduation rate, this is completely unacceptable and unfair. While our staff should be working to find curricular and wrap around supports for our students, we have administrators working instead on helping students' families pay a bill or find a donor to do so.

I urge the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee to support HB 111 Transmit transfer student records within five school days so that districts can focus on educating our students without disruption.