

79TH HOUSE DISTRICT

PARTS OF CLARK COUNTY
INCLUDING: SPRINGFIELD, NEW CARLISLE,
SOUTH CHARLESTON, AND ENON

COMMITTEES

CHAIR: AGRICULTURE & RURAL
DEVELOPMENT
FEDERALISM
PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION



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State Representative Kyle Koehler Ohio House of Representatives

Chairman Jones, Vice Chair Manchester, Ranking Member Robinson and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony for House Bill 409, which holds online schools accountable by amending the sections of the Revised Code which relate to student participation.

During the 131st General Assembly, we in the legislature passed House Bill 2, which enacted comprehensive charter school accountability measures. Since HB 2's passage, we have seen several significant changes in charter school education. HB 2 improved state oversight of sponsors, increased operator accountability, and led to higher-quality sponsorship practices. While many of the reforms adopted by the legislature are working, there is more we can do to increase accountability. The legislation before you today will further hold online schools accountable for the students they have been entrusted to educate.

Under present law, a student enrolled in an e-school in Ohio must be withdrawn after 72 consecutive hours of unexcused absence. The present structure of the law makes it possible for a student enrolled in e-school to completely neglect schoolwork for up to 71 hours (missing the equivalent of days of school and many chapters of material) only to log back in for a few minutes to avoid being withdrawn and potentially referred for truancy. Logging in resets the clock and allows a student disengaged from schoolwork to be in good standing.

The best interest of students in e-schools, both for their educational growth and personal safety, is served by holding schools accountable for student attendance and completion of instructional activities. As legislators, it is also in our best interests as stewards of Ohioans' tax dollars that we ensure that the money we give to e-schools is used effectively educate students.

Online schools do a fantastic job for thousands of students. The personalized learning environment which allows students to move at their own pace attracts many Ohioans to this important educational option. While self-paced online instruction is a beneficial option for many students, it may not be the best option for all students.

Some students benefit from the structure offered by personalized engagement plans, especially when extra help is needed to keep the student from falling behind. These plans are a crucial piece of this legislation. HB 409 require each e-school to create a school policy regarding failure to participate in instructional activities. It also requires that schools include a statement of consequences for students who continue to fail to engage.

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If a student has disengaged from academic material but is using the flexibility of online learning to “game the system” to narrowly avoid being counted as truant, no positive outcome ensues. Ohio’s taxpayers are providing funds to an entity that is not providing the student with an education, and, most importantly, the child is missing opportunities to learn and grow.

This bill allows Ohio’s online schools to create individualized student engagement policies regarding students who do not meet expectations for participation, and codifies the ability for these schools to withdraw a student who does not follow the criteria laid out in the plan.

The bill before you today will continue the General Assembly’s commitment to accountability and personalized learning for Ohio students. This legislation holds online schools accountable for the students they are educating, while also giving them the flexibility necessary to withdraw students who do not engage.