



Representative Don Manning
59th Ohio House District

HB 118 Sponsor Testimony

Chairman Green, Vice Chair McClain, Ranking Member Sheehy, and members of the House Transportation and Public Safety Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 118, the West Branch Rule.

This piece of legislation does two things; it prohibits a school district from making cuts to busing in the middle of the academic year and requires a school district to maintain the same level of busing from the previous academic year to place a levy on the ballot. The need for this legislation was brought to my attention when parents in the West Branch School District began to reach out and ask me to do something about the cuts that the district was putting in place.

In November, West Branch failed to pass a levy and made the decision to cut all busing to students who live within two miles of their school, in complete disregard to a state performance audit that provided a path to eliminate their deficit. These cuts took place at the beginning of January, which forced students to walk upwards of two miles to school during the darkest and coldest part of the year. Students who were once safely transported to school now had to walk along rural roads, without sidewalks, to receive their education.

We cannot allow our youth and their families to continue to be used “as a successful tactic to pass a levy,” as I was told by a West Branch administrator. Our students want to go to school, and cuts to busing make this much more difficult for low-income families who may not have access to reliable transportation to get their children there. Schools are required to maintain a five-year forecast of expenses, so with proper budgeting, making drastic cuts to busing mid-year should never have to be on the table. My bill is one for the students and families across Ohio, and it helps ensure that our students are able to make it to school without the worry of local politics.

I want to thank you for your time and attention to this matter and am happy to answer any questions that you may have.

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