

# ST. CLAIRSVILLE-RICHLAND CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

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## **St. Clairsville-Richland City School District**

Jim Cook, Board of Education Member

Chairwoman Lehner, Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Fedor and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on SB 358. My name is Jim Cook and I am retired engineer and an 18-year Board of Education member at St. Clairsville-Richland City Schools in eastern Ohio. SB 358 is intended to provide schools much needed flexibility during the pandemic. While I certainly appreciate this intent, I am here today to talk about the negative impact that freezing the EdChoice list and creating another "safe harbor" will have on mislabeled schools like ours.

St. Clairsville is a high-performing school district, and our elementary school is a high-performing school. However, our elementary school has been mislabeled as "failing"—and EdChoice eligible—due to outdated and misleading grades on Improving At-Risk K-3 Readers Measure. On the two most recent report cards, the elementary school received an overall grade of "B" and "B", and on the Third Grade Reading Guarantee, the school had a promotion rate of 100% in 2020, 100% in 2019, 99.2% in 2018, and 100% in 2017. Attachment #1 shows a more complete picture of our elementary school's grades. Yet, despite these performances, SB 358 will continue to label this same school as failing by freezing the EdChoice list and delaying report cards until at least the 2022-2023 school year.

How did we get here? Our school has been labeled as "failing" based on building grade data from the 2014 report card. Since that time, our scores have improved, yet due to previous safe harbor provisions, those scores weren't counted, leading us to remain categorized as "failing." SB 358 will continue to keep us on the list, with no way to get out.

I want to take a closer look at Improving At-Risk K-3 Readers component since that's why our elementary school is on the list. The intent of this component is to look at how successful a school is at improving struggling readers. The measurement is only of those students identified as being "not on track," so it can be of a small portion of the total population. The measurement is the number of students moved to "on track" by the end of the school year divided by the number of students that started the school year "not on track". Consider a building where just 25 out of 193 students started "not on track". Over the course of a year 8 students are moved to "on track". The K-3 measure is 8/25

or 32%, a letter grade of “D”. Although 91% of the students finished the year “on track”, the building gets a “D” for the year. If a building receives a “D” or “F” in two out of three years, it is deemed “failing.”

Revised Code mandates that the state average of this K-3 measure be designated the “low C”. That means each year approximately half of the elementary schools are placed in the “D” or “F” bucket. Based on the original 2020-2021 EdChoice list, over 500 buildings qualified by this K-3 measure (300 by K-3 only). These numbers will remain relatively constant year after year regardless of any absolute improvement since by design nearly half of the buildings receive a “failing” grade each year.

Furthermore, Revised Code mandates that a third-grade student must pass both the reading and writing portions of the third grade ELA assessment for that student to be considered “on track”. Think about that, an improving reading measure requires a writing assessment. In addition, Administrative Code requires a one student deduction in the numerator of the calculation for a student that fails to score proficient on the third grade ELA assessment and was not on a reading improvement plan (RIMP). What does all this mean? In our case we had TWO third grade students pass the fall diagnostic test and pass the reading portion of the spring ELA assessment. In other words, THEY COULD READ. But they didn’t pass the writing portion of the ELA assessment and, since they weren’t on a reading improvement plan (because they passed the fall diagnostic test), we got deductions to the numerator in the calculation. It was these deductions that caused our grade to go from a “C” to a “D” and put us on the EdChoice list. And in reality, it’s a double deduction. First, the student wasn’t included in the numerator because the student didn’t pass the writing assessment. And second, the student was deducted from the numerator because the student wasn’t on a reading improvement plan. Bottom line, these students could read and we never should have received a “D”. Further supporting this, the same school received an overall grade of “B” in the same school year.

As you will recall, HB 197 prevented new schools from being added to the EdChoice list. However, HB 197 also allowed the 2019 report card to be used to get certain schools off the EdChoice list. Attachment #2 illustrates how this worked. Those schools that did not continue to meet the EdChoice conditions prescribed in section 3310.03 were removed from the list. If this same flexibility had been afforded during the safe harbor provided in years 2015, 2016, and 2017, namely that a report card grade could help you but not hurt you, then our school would never have been placed on the EdChoice list.

SB 358 would extend the prohibition of 1) adding new schools to the EdChoice list and 2) issuing report cards with consequential grades through the 2021-2022 school year. This means that most sanctions imposed by previous school years will remain in effect through the 2022-2023 school year. It is even worse for EdChoice. There is a one-year gap between the report card year and the EdChoice year. Those buildings, including our elementary school, currently on the EdChoice list will remain on that list through the 2023-2024 school year. Attachment #3 illustrates this. This means that district-funded vouchers will be issued for 2023-2024 school year based on report card grades from 2013-2014. This can’t possibly feel right. That data would be ten years old. Our school will be trapped on the list for 5 years no matter how well our students perform. This will have a significant financial impact on our

district. Students are not fleeing our district due to performance, but vouchers are being used for faith-based schools regardless of performance. The long-term cost of 5 years of EdChoice sanctions will approach \$6 million.

I would like to call your attention to attachment #4 which shows K-3 grades over the last 6 years for actual schools across the state. Those schools above the double line are NOT on the EdChoice list despite failing the K-3 Literacy component on the report card for 5 of the past 6 years. While on the other hand, those schools shown below the double line are on the EdChoice list even though they received PASSING scores on the K-3 Literacy component on 4 of the past 6 report cards. How can this be? How can those schools below the double line be frozen on the EdChoice list for 5 years?

There are many high-performing schools on the current EdChoice list. For instance, 126 buildings had overall building grades of C or better for the 2018 and 2019 report cards while 84 buildings had a 95% or higher Reading Guarantee score over the last two years. Furthermore 71 buildings had a passing K-3 Literacy grade on their 2019 report card while 57 buildings had a passing K-3 Literacy grade on both their 2017 and 2019 report cards. I implore you to explore ways, like using grades from 2018 and 2019 only (not 2014) or grades from those safe harbor years (2015, 2016, and 2017) or the Third Grade Reading Guarantee promotion rate so that high-performing schools aren't continually harmed by this unfair measure. Please do not continue to kick the current list down the road. There are too many good schools on this list and it is inequitable to keep them on this list

Chairwoman Lehner and members of the committee, we sincerely appreciate your leadership and efforts to assist schools during this unprecedented time. SB 358 certainly makes some necessary changes; however, freezing the current EdChoice list through the 2023-2024 school year will force high-quality schools like ours to remain labeled as "failing" causing us to continue to bear the financial costs associated with district funded vouchers. We hope to be able to work with you to find a resolution to this problem. I will be glad to answer any questions.

## St. Clairsville Elementary School

		Safe Harbor					
	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	
Improving At-Risk K-3 Readers	D	NR	C	C	D*	C	
Performance Index	B	C	C	C	B	C	
Overall Value-Added	C	B	C	A	A	B	
Overall Building	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	B	B	
3rd Gr Reading Guarantee	98.0%	98.4%	98.4%	100.0%	99.2%	100.0%	

\* Due to two RIMP deductions of 3rd grade students that:  
a) passed their fall diagnostics  
b) passed the reading portion of their spring ELA assessment  
c) i.e. THEY COULD READ

NR: Less than 5% of kindergarten students are not on track this year.

Attachment #1

### HB 197 & SB 358 Provide an Opportunity for Removal from the EdChoice List

	2012-2013	2013-2014	Safe Harbor			2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
			2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017				
Building 1	Yes	Yes				No		Placed on 19/20 EdChoice List	Removed from 20/21 EdChoice List *
Building 1		Yes				No	No		
Building 2	D	F				C		Placed on 19/20 EdChoice List	Removed from 20/21 EdChoice List *
Building 2		F				C	C		
Building 3	D	C				D		Placed on 19/20 EdChoice List	Removed from 20/21 EdChoice List *
Building 3		C				D	B		

Performance, Graduation Rate, and Lowest 10% have four qualifying Report Cards as shown above.

K-3 Literacy has just three qualifying Report Cards as shown below.

Building 4	N/A	D				D		Placed on 19/20 EdChoice List	Remained on 20/21 EdChoice List *
Building 4		D				D	B		

\* HB 197 Section 31 ð However, the Department shall accept, process, and award scholarships for any of the following:

\* HB 197 Section 31(A)(4) ð met the conditions prescribed in section 3310.03 of the Revised Code for the 2019-2020 school year ð and also **continued to meet the conditions** for the 2020-2021 school year

**St Clairsville K-3 Literacy Safe Harbor & HB 197 & SB 358 Penalties**

2012-2013	2013-2014	Safe Harbor			2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
N/A	D	NR	C	C	D		Placed on 19/20 EdChoice List					
N/A	D	NR	C	C	D	C *		Remained on 20/21 EdChoice List *				
N/A	D	NR	C	C	D	C	Report Card Not Issued	Will remain on 21/22 EdChoice List **				
N/A	D	NR	C	C	D	C	Report Card Not Issued	Report Card Not Issued	Will remain on 22/23 EdChoice List **			
N/A	D	NR	C	C	D	C	Report Card Not Issued	Report Card Not Issued		Will remain on 23/24 EdChoice List **		
					D	C	Report Card Not Issued	Report Card Not Issued				1st Opportunity To Be Removed From EdChoice List

**However, for previously designated EdChoice schools, the absence of the 2021-2022 report card means the EdChoice designation will remain in effect for the 2023-2024 school year.**

\* HB 197 Section 31 ð However, the Department shall accept, process, and award scholarships for any of the following:  
 HB 197 Section 31(A)(4) ð met the conditions prescribed in section 3310.03 of the Revised Code for the 2019-2020 school year ð and also continued to meet the conditions for the 2020-2021 school year

\*\* SB 358 Section 5 Sec.17(B)(1) The Department of Education shall not publish state report card ratings under section 3302.03, 3302.033, 3314.012, or 3314.017 of the Revised Code for the 2019-2020, 2020-2021, and 2021-2022 school years ð  
 SB 358 Section 5 Sec.17(B)(2) ð If a school district or building was subject to any of the following penalties or sanctions in the 2019-2020 or 2020-2021 school year based on its report card rating for the previous school years, those penalties or sanctions shall remain in effect for the 2020-2021, 2021-2022, and 2022-2023 school years.

## NOT Designated an EdChoice School for 2019-2020 and 2020-2021

### Safe Harbor & HB 197 Protected

Building Name	District Name	Safe Harbor					HB 197 2019	
		2013	2014	2015	2016	2017		2018
Real Building B1	Real District B1	N/A	D	D	F	D	C	D
Real Building B2	Real District B2	N/A	F	D	D	D	C	D
Real Building B3	Real District B3	N/A	D	D	D	D	C	D
Real Building B4	Real District B4	N/A	D	D	D	D	C	D
Real Building B5	Real District B5	N/A	F	D	F	D	C	D
Real Building B6	Real District B6	N/A	D	F	F	F	B	D
Real Building B7	Real District B7	N/A	D	D	F	D	C	D
Real Building B8	Real District B8	N/A	C	F	D	D	D	D
Real Building B9	Real District B9	N/A	NR	F	F	D	D	D
Real Building B10	Real District B10	N/A	A	D	D	D	D	D
Real Building B11	Real District B11	N/A	B	F	F	F	F	D
Real Building B12	Real District B12	N/A	C	D	D	D	D	D
Real Building B13	Real District B13	N/A	C	F	F	D	D	D
Real Building B14	Real District B14	N/A	C	D	F	D	D	D
Real Building B15	Real District B15	N/A	NR	D	F	D	D	D
Real Building B16	Real District B16	N/A	NR	F	F	D	D	D
Real Building B17	Real District B17	N/A	C	D	F	F	F	D
Real Building B18	Real District B18	N/A	A	D	F	D	F	D
Real Building B19	Real District B19	N/A	NR	F	F	D	D	F
Real Building B20	Real District B20	N/A	C	D	F	D	D	D
Real Building B21	Real District B21	N/A	B	D	D	D	D	D
Real Building B22	Real District B22	N/A	C	F	F	D	D	D

#### Improving At-Risk K-3 Reading Grades

Safe Harbor (use years 14 & 18) prevented these schools from being placed on the 19/20 EdChoice list. Since these schools were not on the 19/20 list, HB 197 prevented them from being added to the 20/21 list.

## Designated an EdChoice School for 2019-2020 and 2020-2021

### Safe Harbor PUNISHED

Building Name	District Name	Safe Harbor					2018	2019
		2013	2014	2015	2016	2017		
Real Building C1	Real District C1	N/A	D	NR	C	C	D	C
Real Building C2	Real District C2	N/A	D	C	C	C	D	C
Real Building C3	Real District C3	N/A	D	C	C	B	D	C
Real Building C4	Real District C4	N/A	D	C	C	C	F	C

#### Improving At-Risk K-3 Reading Grades

Safe Harbor (use years 14 & 18) placed these schools on the 19/20 EdChoice list. Since these schools were on the 19/20 list, HB 197 kept them on the 20/21 list.