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Senator Stephanie Kunze
Senate Bill 253
February 4, 2020
Senate Local Government, Public Safety, and Veterans Affairs Committee
Sponsor Testimony

Chairman Manning, Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Maharath and members of the Senate Local Government, Public Safety, and Veterans Affairs Committee. Thank you for allowing me to present sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 253.

Keeping our school districts and students safe is a priority for all of us in the Ohio Senate. Recently, we have seen an increase in threatened acts of violence in our school buildings throughout the state. These threats disrupt all school activities and place families and communities on edge in the impacted areas.

What Senate Bill 253 would do, if enacted into law, is provide local school districts another option to deal with these situations and it is our responsibility to help students secure a mental health evaluation if an undiagnosed mental illness is truly the underlying root cause of these repeated threats of violence.

Specifically, Senate Bill 253 specifies:

- The superintendent of each school district and the chief administrative officer for each chartered nonpublic school shall report to the Ohio school safety center each time a student enrolled in the district or school makes a threat regardless of whether the district or school has taken any disciplinary action against the student.
- The board of education of any city, exempted village, or local school district **MAY** adopt a resolution that authorizes the superintendent of schools to expel a pupil from school for a period of up to one year for communicating a threat or do physical harm to persons or property if conditions specified in lines 171 to 185 of the legislation are met.
- The board of education of any city, exempted village, or local school district **MAY** require the pupil as a condition of reinstatement from an expulsion, to undergo an assessment to determine whether the pupil poses a danger to the pupil's self, other pupil's, or school employees.
- The telephone number for the SaferOH tip line shall be conspicuously posted throughout each of the district's or school's building and on the district website.

Senate Bill 253 also codifies that the Director of Public Safety shall establish the Ohio School Safety Center within the Division of Homeland Security and states that the Ohio School Safety Center shall develop a mechanism by which public and chartered non-public schools may make reports to the Center.

If this legislation sounds familiar to you, it is a reintroduction of House Bill 498 that was discussed during the 131st General Assembly and Senate Bill 289 from the 132nd General Assembly. I want to reinforce that the provisions of this legislation allowing a pupil to undergo an assessment as a condition of reinstatement from an expulsion **is permissive** in nature and is **not a blanket mandate**.

Chairman Manning and members of the Senate Local Government, Public Safety, and Veterans Affairs Committee; thank you for allowing me to present sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 253. I am happy to answer any questions that the committee might have.