

Oct. 6, 2015

Good morning, and thank you for allowing me the opportunity to be here today.

My name is John Manfredi and I have been a member of the Berkshire School Board for ten years, currently serving in my third term as a school board member.

I am here today to speak to you about H.B. 148, as the idea of consolidating school resources to benefit the students has been important to me ever since assuming my current position on the Berkshire board. We have worked hard to ensure that our students receive the best education possible. The Berkshire School District has been rated as having an excellent or A rating for many years, and we continue to strive to improve the quality of education we provide.

Since I have been on our board we have closed two elementary buildings in order to better serve our students and to control costs. This consolidation process allowed us to maintain the curriculum and keep the class sizes at a manageable level. This past summer, the Ledgesmont School District located in the northeast corner of Geauga County was merged into our district to create a larger combined Junior High and High School. Following this consolidation, we currently have a total of three school buildings, comprised of two K-6 buildings and one 7-12 building.

The process of merging the district together has had a positive effect on the students because the students have more class choices and we have been able to add classes as well. The parents I have talked to have

also expressed how well students from both districts are blending together.

The current high school building we occupy was built in 1936. We have had many repairs and updates, but each time we do one update, we seem to find multiple other repairs that need attention. We have a Permanent Improvement Levy that is voted on every 5 years that we use to maintain the buildings and grounds. During the beginning and end of each school year we have days that are very hot in our non-air conditioned high school building, and it becomes very difficult to educate our students under those conditions. For us to attempt to upgrade to a modern, energy-efficient HVAC system in the current building would be cost prohibitive. In the wintertime, depending on the classroom, students either need to wear their winter coat or need to get down to a T-shirt because of the poor air circulation of the current heating system.

When we first started our conversations with Kent State regarding a new combined facility which could be located on the 87.5 acre Kent Geauga campus, I felt that the additional choices the students could have, along with the consolidation of services and administrative support would be a great benefit in terms of improving quality of education while reducing operating costs. The idea of having a new complex that would better serve the students, be a more secure and productive learning environment, and be far more energy efficient to operate was something I felt was well worth pursuing. My initial conversation with community members produced some very positive responses, and some of the elder members I spoke to stated that when the Kent State Geauga facility was established over thirty years ago, the long term thought was it could be part of our future High School

planning in this county. H.B. 148 would enable us to have students in a setting where education can be shared by more students in a very cost-effective manner. Having more students will also allow us to offer more classes and greater variety of classes. We also will have the ability to have staffing shared between Kent State and our High School. There are many services that we can share; this is what the public looks for in public education, shared services that will keep costs to taxpayers as low as possible.

I strongly encourage this body to support funding a project that will encourage more consolidations to improve education possibilities and facilitate partnering with local universities and colleges, as this will only help strengthen the state's overall education plan. I believe this would be a template that would serve to show the public that Ohio is progressive when it comes to supporting higher education, and does it in an innovative way that will help keep the overall costs of educating each student as low as possible while improving the overall quality of public education in our state.