



Jarrold Tudor
Ohio House of Representatives – Education Committee
Proponent testimony for House Bill 148
October 6, 2015

Chairman Hayes, Vice-Chairman Brenner, Ranking Member Fedor and members of the House Education Committee, thank you for allowing me to provide testimony in support of House Bill 148, which would provide a realistic pathway for school district consolidation in Geauga County. My name is Jarrod Tudor, and I am the Interim Dean of Kent State University's Geauga campus.

In 2014, Kent State University at Geauga was asked to serve as a moderator in the discussions among four Geauga County school districts. A School District Consolidation Study Group ("SDCSG"), which I was asked to chair, was formed and has been meeting monthly at the Kent State University at Geauga campus. The SDCSG included representatives from Kent State University at Geauga, the Berkshire Local School District, the Cardinal Local School District, the Ledgemont Local School District, the Newbury Local School District, the Auburn Career Center, and the Geauga Growth Partnership. Other members of the SDCSG consist of local leaders in both business and government. Since the SDCSG's formation, the Berkshire Local School District accepted the Ledgemont Local School District through a territory transfer earlier in January of 2015. In September of 2015, the Cardinal Local School District withdrew its membership in the SDCSG.

House Bill 148 would provide an incentive for a newly-formed school district to be achieved through consolidation, in this case, of the Berkshire Local School District and the Newbury Local School District.



The primary benefit of the legislation is to create a school district through consolidation that is self-sufficient and entirely within a county. As is the case in Geauga county, the need for such a consolidation is based on declining population growth, an associated decline in student enrollment and a dire fiscal outlook for the districts involved.

The opportunities for current and future students in Geauga county are limited so long as the school districts mentioned remain separate and financially unstable. House Bill 148 is a realistic and logical tool that the Berkshire and Newbury districts could use to create a sustainable foundation for success in education. This bill is only the first step in a long process, and Kent State University is committed with further exploring an increased relationship with primary and secondary education in Geauga County. Without the legislature's help in allowing the Berkshire and Newbury school districts to consolidate, real progress in the education of Berkshire and Newbury's students is impossible.

Kent State University is a committed community member in Geauga County and throughout Northeast Ohio. We are excited to work in partnership with the educators and community members involved to ensure a seamless quality educational experience should the districts decide to consolidate.

Chairman Hayes and members of the committee, I thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 148, and I would be happy to answer questions at this time.