

# WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

PLEASE COMPLETE THE WITNESS INFORMATION FORM BEFORE TESTIFYING

DATE: MARCH 17, 2015

NAME: GEORGE N. VERHOFF

ORGANIZATION: COLUMBUS GROVE LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT  
(IF APPLICABLE)

POSITION/TITLE: SUPERINTENDENT

ADDRESS: 201 W. CROSS STREET

CITY: COLUMBUS GROVE STATE: OHIO ZIP: 45830

TELEPHONE: 419-659-4301

ARE YOU REPRESENTING: YOURSELF  ORGANIZATION \_\_\_\_\_

DO YOU WISH TO TESTIFY ON

LEGISLATION (BILL NUMBER): HB64

SPECIFIC ISSUE: \_\_\_\_\_

SUBJECT MATTER: \_\_\_\_\_

DO YOU FAVOR \_\_\_\_\_ OR OPPOSE  THE ENACTMENT OF LEGISLATION REGARDING THIS ISSUE?

PLEASE GIVE A BRIEF STATEMENT OF THE GROUNDS ON WHICH YOU FAVOR OR OPPOSE SUCH ENACTMENT:

1. ESC'S PROVIDE SIGNIFICANT COST EFFICIENCIES FOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS
2. ESC'S PLAY A VITAL ROLE IN ASSISTING DISTRICTS WITH STATE AND FEDERAL UPDATES
3. ESC'S COORDINATE NUMEROUS PROGRAMS THAT WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE FOR LOCAL RURAL DISTRICTS TO PROVIDE ON THEIR OWN

WILL YOU HAVE A WRITTEN STATEMENT, VISUAL AIDS, OR OTHER MATERIAL TO DISTRIBUTE?

YES  NO \_\_\_\_\_

(IF YES, PLEASE PROVIDE COPIES TO THE CHAIRMAN OR SECRETARY)

HOW MUCH TIME WILL YOUR TESTIMONY REQUIRE? 3-5 MINUTES

# *Columbus Grove Local School District*

## Board Members

Kenneth D. Kruse, President  
Brent D. Stechsulte, Vice President  
Brad Brubaker  
Brian E. Jones  
Ned A. Stechsulte

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201 West Cross Street  
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High School Principal  
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Bradley M. Cavelage  
Elementary Principal  
Phone: (419) 659-2631

## **House Primary & Secondary Educational Subcommittee**

**Thursday, March 19, 2015**

### **Testimony of Nick Verhoff, Superintendent of Columbus Grove Local Schools**

Good Afternoon Chairman Cupp, Ranking Minority Member Phillips & Members of the House Primary & Secondary Education Subcommittee of Finance. My name is Nick Verhoff and I am Superintendent of Columbus Grove Local Schools in Putnam County. This is my third year as superintendent at Columbus Grove. Prior to my current position, I served in teaching and administrative positions for 16 years in the Dayton area. I came back to Columbus Grove, my alma mater, because my wife and I wanted to raise our children closer to family. We knew Columbus Grove would be a wonderful place to live and raise a family because, like the other eight school districts in Putnam County, Columbus Grove is a rural, high performing district that depends greatly on the numerous educational services provided by the Putnam County ESC.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on the significant role that Educational Service Centers play for public school districts throughout the state in providing support and leadership to help districts meet the needs of all children in a fiscally efficient manner.

I would like to briefly share my concerns regarding Governor Kasich's budget proposal within HB 64, which would cut ESC funding by 25% over the biennium, greatly affecting the impact of direct student services provided by high quality ESCs.

From an economic standpoint, ESCs are extremely cost-effective, particularly to rural districts. As you have heard from Botkins Superintendent Connie Schneider, ESC services are a cost-effective and quality solution to the many rural and small town districts in our state, which compose over 70% of all public school districts in Ohio. Small communities like Columbus Grove simply do not have the capacity to serve the needs of our children with moderate to severe disabilities. Through the collaborative efforts of the Putnam County ESC and nine school districts in our county, we are able to provide high quality educational services to these children in a cost-efficient manner. In education, we hear a great deal about the benefits of shared services. This approach, which is coordinated by our local ESC, is a prime example of this model which benefits both the students and the school districts.

To show how effective this model works for schools throughout the state, I would like to share with you a phone call I received three weeks ago. It was from our special educational coordinator at the ESC. He informed me that he had spoken to the parents of two different special needs students in our district.

These two students were on an Autism Scholarship, but their parents wanted to see what type of educational programs our public school could provide for their children. Both sets of parents and students went to visit our programs and were highly impressed. One of these students is now in his second week at our county program located in Pandora and the other is likely going to begin at the program in Continental within the next week. In an era of school choice, these two different parents looked for the best educational placement for their children. They both chose the educational units provided through the Putnam County ESC. This simply would not have happened if the Putnam County ESC did not coordinate these programs for our county schools.

Vikki Clemons, Director of Instructional Services at the Hamilton County ESC, noted that ESCs have been instrumental in deploying initiatives from the state and federal levels. This point is critical for rural and small town districts. In the previous district I served, we were large enough to have not only a Director of Pupil Services, Curriculum, and Technology, but each department had its own share of directors as well. In rural districts, the level of management usually extends to an elementary principal, a high school principal, and the superintendent. Some districts in our county have the superintendent serving in one of the building administrator positions in addition to superintendent duties. The support from the Putnam County ESC in terms of curriculum and special education is invaluable. The nine schools in Putnam County look to the ESC for its guidance in initiating mandates with the Third Grade Reading Guarantee, OPES/OTES, Resident Educator, as well as the frequent federal and state changes in special education. We are fortunate to have curriculum coordinators, school psychologists, and special education directors from the ESC who serve as resident experts for all of us. Through this consortia model, local districts again receive high level services in these areas in a cost-effective manner. Some examples of the services we receive include professional development, gifted education, special education, grant writing, and curriculum support. This does not include the speech, occupational, and physical therapists who provide services for our students. Additionally, we have four ESC preschool programs in our county that have been five-star rated by the Step Up to Quality rating system. This worthwhile service model helps school districts adjust to and meet the numerous state mandates taking place in public education.

While the cost-effectiveness of the services provided by our local ESC cannot be overstated, I would like to briefly touch on a number of other county-wide programs provided by our county ESC. The Putnam County ESC coordinates our county quiz bowl and scholastic league, arts festival, science fair, summer credit recovery courses, summer technology camps, summer and fall migrant programs, and ABLE/GED courses. These have become valued programs and events in our county to both students and parents. Last Sunday, I was privileged to attend our annual Putnam County Arts Festival at Pandora-Gilboa. After walking through the visual arts display of over 1,000 works of art in the commons area, visitors then entered the gymnasium to hear the All-County Choir and Band perform to a packed house on a Sunday afternoon. This event was made possible by the excellent coordination of our ESC's two curriculum coordinators.

Putnam County Superintendents have had the opportunity to meet with State Superintendent Ross in the past. One of the key points Dr. Ross always mentioned to us was the fact that Putnam County Schools were high performing districts at a low cost to our tax payers. For example, on the most recent

annual Cupp Report, over 92% of the school districts in the state have a higher per pupil expenditure amount than Columbus Grove. While the districts in Putnam County are flattered by this statement from Superintendent Ross, we all agree that our level of performance would not be what it is without the longtime support and leadership of the Putnam County Educational Service Center.

I urge you not to cut the funding as proposed in HB 64, as it would have a devastating effect on the many rural and small town school districts in the state that benefit from the many ESC services. Additionally, on behalf of all nine local superintendents in Putnam County, I ask that ESC funding be returned to the 2007 level. As leaders of our respective districts, we are tasked with the responsibility of balancing fiscally sound decisions in the best interest of our students. A strong ESC will allow for us to continue quality education and cost-effective services to our students.

Thank you, again, for allowing me to share my testimony today. If I can be of further assistance in the future, please let me know.

# WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

PLEASE COMPLETE THE WITNESS INFORMATION FORM BEFORE TESTIFYING

DATE: 3-18-2015

NAME: PUTNAM COUNTY LOCAL SUPERINTENDENTS

ORGANIZATION: LOCAL SPTS OF 9 LOCAL DISTRICTS  
(IF APPLICABLE)

POSITION/TITLE: WRITTEN TESTIMONY TO BE SUBMITTED

ADDRESS: ALONG WITH TESTIMONY OF NICK VERHOFF

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: COLUMBUS GROVE SPT.

TELEPHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

ARE YOU REPRESENTING: YOURSELF \_\_\_\_\_ ORGANIZATION X

DO YOU WISH TO TESTIFY ON

LEGISLATION (BILL NUMBER): HB64

SPECIFIC ISSUE: Decreased Funding for ESC

SUBJECT MATTER: \_\_\_\_\_

DO YOU FAVOR \_\_\_\_\_ OR OPPOSE X THE ENACTMENT OF LEGISLATION REGARDING THIS ISSUE?

PLEASE GIVE A BRIEF STATEMENT OF THE GROUNDS ON WHICH YOU FAVOR OR OPPOSE SUCH ENACTMENT:

OUR ESC IS A VITAL AND NECESSARY PARTNER THAT PROVIDES QUALITY, COST EFFECTIVE SERVICES TO ALL LOCAL DISTRICTS. ESC FUNDING MUST BE ADEQUATE FOR THEM TO CONTINUE OUR SERVICES.

WILL YOU HAVE A WRITTEN STATEMENT, VISUAL AIDS, OR OTHER MATERIAL TO DISTRIBUTE?

YES X No \_\_\_\_\_

(IF YES, PLEASE PROVIDE COPIES TO THE CHAIRMAN OR SECRETARY)

HOW MUCH TIME WILL YOUR TESTIMONY REQUIRE? WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY

*Chairman Cupp, Ranking Minority Member Phillips, and Members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Subcommittee: Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of Educational Service Center (ESC) funding.*

As superintendents of the nine local districts in Putnam County, we rely on the Putnam County ESC to provide our mostly small, rural districts with quality and cost-effective services that we would not be able to adequately provide our students if we were on our own. The best example is special education programs. As a local district, we may have only a few students who need a certain level of specialized services. It would be cost-prohibitive for us to provide a special education teacher, and needed support personnel such as psychologists, speech, physical and occupational therapists for just a few students. Utilizing the ESC to employ these personnel allows us to provide our students with the appropriate services while sharing the costs with other districts our size who also could not afford to provide for these students on their own.

Other shared services that the Putnam County ESC provides us are curriculum coordinators, early childhood teachers and coordinators, staff development in this ever-changing educational environment, the coordination of monthly meetings for administrators, guidance counselors, and technology coordinators. The ESC also coordinates other county-wide programs such as quiz bowl and scholastic league, arts festival, science fair, summer credit recovery courses, summer technology camp, summer and fall migrant programs, and ABLE/GED classes. All of these programs and services are needed, but as local school districts, we would be extremely challenged to provide them on our own.

Putnam County ESC personnel have also written and implemented numerous grants both for individual school districts, as well as county-wide. Programs such as our highly-successful 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning grants allow our districts to assist our at-risk students with after-school programming that again would be difficult to provide on our own as small districts. This is just one example of a grant written and implemented by the ESC showing the shared services model that benefits children in need in all of our school districts.

We urge you NOT to cut the funding for ESCs as has occurred for many years now. In fact, we would like to see ESC funding returned to the 2007 level. As local districts, we are charged with the responsibility of making fiscally sound decisions for our districts. We need adequate funding to ESCs in order for us to continue to provide quality and cost-effective services to our students.

Thank you, again, for allowing us to provide this testimony.



Nick Verhoff, Superintendent  
Columbus Grove Local School



Joel Mengerink, Superintendent  
Continental Local School



Nick Langhals, Superintendent  
Jennings Local School



Karl Lammers, Superintendent  
Kalida Local School



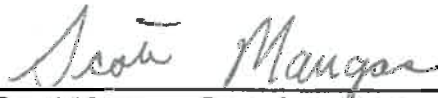
Greg Williamson, Superintendent  
Leipsic Local School



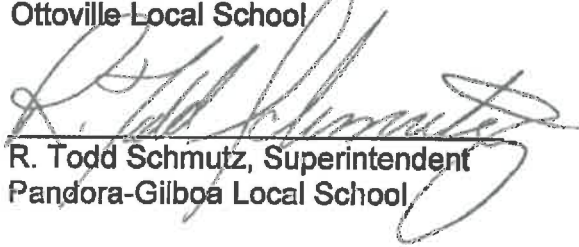
Kerry Johnson, Superintendent  
Miller City-New Cleveland Local School



Don Horstman, Superintendent  
Ottawa-Glandorf Local School



Scott Mangas, Superintendent  
Ottoville Local School



R. Todd Schmutz, Superintendent  
Pandora-Gilboa Local School