



Sponsor Testimony: HB 246 - OSFC Funding for DD Classrooms

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair Slaby, Ranking Member Fedor and members of the House Education and Career Readiness Committee. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony today on HB 246, which would allow classroom facilities that specifically serve students with developmental disabilities to be eligible for funding through the Ohio School Facilities Commission (OSFC).

Forty-five counties in Ohio have K-12 educational programs for students with developmental disabilities through their county boards. Additional counties host DD school programs in public school settings using county funds. Currently, neither of these programs are eligible for critical construction, renovation and security reimbursement funds through OSFC. That means over 300 classrooms teaching over 2,000 DD students do not have access to state money for school facilities.

A large body of research shows that the quality of a school environment greatly affects students' learning outcomes. A 2008 study published in the *Journal of Educational Administration* revealed that poor quality facilities correlate with a diminished focus on academics, less enthusiastic teachers who are less likely to provide additional help for students, and a greater perception of classroom disorder. An earlier study showed that facility quality ratings that increased even from only poor to fair accounted for an increase of 5.46 points in average achievement scores, while schools that moved from poor to excellent showed achievement score increases of almost 11 points. Building age itself is also associated with lower grades on basic skills assessments.¹

With that in mind, it is important that we provide students with developmental disabilities equitable access to facility resources that will allow them to learn and thrive alongside their counterparts in traditional school settings. OSFC is now offering additional rounds of funding to school districts who have already received money, while our DD classrooms still lack access to these resources. I believe DD educational programs deserve an equal opportunity to receive this funding.

In addition, county boards that fund these K-12 programs are saving schools money. Establishing and housing developmental disabilities programs in traditional schools is an added cost for those districts who have to build a program tailored to DD students' needs alongside the traditional curriculum. County board-sponsored programs allow school districts to forego that additional financial burden by offering these critical resources and educational programming for them.

As a father of five, I know that I would be joined by almost every parent in the state in wanting our children to have the same resources connected to their education as other students, regardless of special needs. And I am proud to stand here with my Republican joint sponsor in a show of the bipartisan support that HB 246 has. Let's continue to work together to make sure all children are able to have the best

¹ Cynthia Uline, Megan Tschannen-Moran, (2008) "[The walls speak: the interplay of quality facilities, school climate, and student achievement](#)", *Journal of Educational Administration*, Vol. 46 Issue: 1, pp.55-73, doi: 10.1108/09578230810849817 (CSFI Feb. 2017, p. 13)

educational facilities they can. Thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony today and both of us welcome any questions you may have.