



House Education and Career Readiness Committee Proponent Testimony – House Bill 246 Tuesday, December 12, 2017

Chairman Brenner, Ranking Member Fedor and members of the Education and Career Readiness Committee, I am Jo Spargo, Chairwoman of Public Policy Committee and Vice-Chair of the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council. I am a parent of a child with developmental disabilities and also, in my professional life, the executive director of REM Ohio, one of the largest providers of services and supports to individuals with developmental disabilities in Ohio.

Today, I offer you the support of the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council for passage of the substitute House Bill 246. As you know, the bill would provide county boards of developmental disabilities that currently operate a school program for children with developmental disabilities the opportunity to seek funding from the Ohio Facilities Construction Commission.

The Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council is created by the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000 (DD Act). Under this federal law, state councils on developmental disabilities are charged with advocacy, capacity building and systems change activities that result in individuals with developmental disabilities being able to access appropriate supports and modifications when necessary, to maximize their educational potential. Further, the DD Act states, in part, “individuals with developmental disabilities and their families are the primary decisionmakers regarding services and supports such individuals and their families receive.”

The DD Council acknowledges that many families have advocated for classrooms that are fully inclusive of children with developmental disabilities. The Council also recognizes there are families who feel they need to send their child to a specialized school operated by their county board of developmental disabilities in order to ensure their care. For those families who have chosen a county board operated school, they deserve access to top notch classroom facilities that children who are attending other public schools have. However, current law does not recognize that county boards of developmental disabilities schools are in fact education facilities eligible for financial support from the Ohio Facilities Construction Commission.

I would also like to thank Representatives Bocchieri and Rezabeck for altering the bill so that this bill does not result in the re-opening of county board schools that have closed.

We believe that families who have made the difficult decision to send their child to a specialized county board school should not be forced to accept subpar facilities.

I thank you for your consideration.

Jo Spargo
Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council