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42ND DISTRICT

Vice Chair- Committee on Higher
Education & Workforce Development

Committee on Health

Committee on Energy &
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Committee on Community &
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Committee on Aging & Long Term Care



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House Bill 442

Sponsor Testimony

Education and Career Readiness Committee

January 19, 2018

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair Slaby and Ranking Member Fedor, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony regarding House Bill 442. The bill would allow international students attending school in Ohio on an F-1 visa to participate in interscholastic athletics while they attend school in Ohio.

Ohio is fortunate to have students to come here from around the world to attend our public and private schools. Families from across the globe want to send their kids to Ohio to get the best education they can and to have a truly American high school experience.

However, students who come here from other countries on an F-1 visa don't really get the complete American high school experience because they are forbidden from playing sports by the Ohio High School Athletic Association. The OHSAA and its members (around 85% of which are public high schools, paid for by taxpayers) arbitrarily decided several years ago that some international students, like exchange students who are here for a year on a J-1 visa, may play sports, but others, who may be here for four years on an F-1 visa, may not participate unless they meet specific criteria that are not applicable to the vast majority of students who receive an F-1 visa.

The OHSAA Commissioner was quoted by the *Mansfield News Journal* in 2015 as saying, "I believe high school sports should be about kids having fun, kids participating, kids learning a game and kids learning life lessons. What life lessons are they going to learn? Teamwork, camaraderie, commitment, dedication, all those pieces." Why would we want to deny a segment of students attending high school in Ohio from having these valuable experiences, just because of where they were born and the type of visa they have to legally attend school here? It is not something that our state government should let happen; especially when such rules are made by our public schools. In addition, many students at these schools become friends with international students. However, because of this rule, they cannot play sports with their friends.

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In House Bill 49, the House and Senate approved an amendment that allows students with a F-1 visa attending a boarding school built before 2014 to participate in interscholastic athletics. House Bill 442 simply expands the purview of that amendment to include all students on an F-1 visa at all schools, both public and private. The bill will create an even playing field for all of Ohio's schools and will make our high schools more attractive to international families when they consider the education of their children. These same students would be more likely to go on and attend college in Ohio and perhaps even work here after they graduate. The ability to create a good first impression with these students and families will do nothing but benefit our state.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify as the sponsor of HB 442. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.