



**Senator Sandra Williams
21st Ohio Senate District**

Committees:

- Public Utilities – Ranking Member
- Ways and Means – Ranking Member
- Finance Subcommittee on Higher Ed - Vice Chair
- Energy and Natural Resources
- Insurance and Financial Institutions

**Senate Bill 82 Sponsor Testimony
Education and Career Readiness Committee
November 13, 2018**

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chairwoman Slaby, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the House Education and Career Readiness Committee thank you for the opportunity to offer sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 82.

Many school districts require the parent or guardian to contact the school if their child is going to be absent. Senate Bill 82 would require school districts to contact parents or guardians within one hundred and twenty minutes from the start of the school day, if their child has been marked absent, or if there is not an excused absence on file. Currently, Ohio law is silent on school districts contacting parents when their child is absent. The purpose of the Alianna Alert is to take precautionary measures to ensure that every child is safe, specifically those students who are not transported by the school systems. While the bill would not make schools liable if something happens to the child, it is imperative that the school alert a parent or guardian so that needed action may be taken.

On January 26, 2017, 14-year-old Alianna DeFreeze went missing in Cleveland, Ohio. Her mother walked to the bus stop with her, watched her get on the bus, and unfortunately, Alianna never made it to her second bus. She was taking public transportation to school when she disappeared. Reportedly, her mother was not alerted of Alianna's absence until 4:15pm when she contacted the school, E-Prep, regarding an upcoming PTA meeting. The mother notified police shortly thereafter. Alianna's mutilated body was found four days later in an abandoned house not far from the school and less than one mile away from the police station.

It is imperative that parents be notified immediately if their children are not present in school. In a missing person's case, every hour is vital. The search for Alianna could have begun hours earlier if the school had alerted Alianna's mother in a timely manner.

According to the Ohio Attorney General's Ohio Missing Children 2017 Clearinghouse report, 20,043 children were reported missing in 2017. Although 98 percent of the children were found safe, two percent or around 421 children were not found and three children were found dead. In 2017, there were 41 attempted child abduction cases and thirty seven percent of the incidents happened when the children were walking to or from school.

Ohio law only discusses attendance in terms of truancy. Currently, school districts set their own policies about how to alert parents. This bill would standardize the practice and serve to soothe the worries of parents in every district. Only thirteen states have laws that require parents to be notified of a child's first unexcused absence and no state has a law that parents should be notified

within the time frame of one hundred twenty minutes. Ohio has the opportunity to be a forefront leader on changing parental notification practices.

Senate Bill 82 is supported by Attorney General Mike DeWine and the Ohio School Board Association has also submitted written testimony. Senate Bill 82 has passed in the Senate Education Committee 10-0 and in the Senate Chamber 33-0 and I look forward to see the House pass this bill as well.

Chairman and members of the committee this completes my testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions.