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Ohio General Assembly
House of Representatives

Sponsor Testimony – HB 8

Chairman Blessing, Vice-Chair Reineke, Ranking Member Clyde and distinguished members of the House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee, thank you for allowing Representative Rezabek and I the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 8.

House Bill 8 would exempt from Public Records Law certain information concerning a minor that is included in a record related to a traffic accident involving a school vehicle in which the minor was an occupant at the time of the accident. Currently, under Federal and state statutes, a student's personal information is protected from the time they step on a school's property until the time that they leave the property. This does not include transportation, however, even though the school is still in *loco parentis* responsible for the child.

This issue was brought before us by a constituent. This constituent's son was a passenger on a school bus that was involved in an accident. Through no fault of the child, the child's information was then made a public record and disseminated on a statewide networked database. The child's name, birthday, home address, and phone number were all made available for anyone who regularly accessed that database or those that would merely submit a public records request to the authority who submitted a police report.

Sadly, my constituent was only one of many at risk because of this loophole. According to the Ohio Department of Public Safety's *Crash Facts* for 2014 and 2015, over 1500 school buses are involved in accidents annually. While the 2016 report has not yet been published, I suspect continuity of the trend. If we assume that the school buses are filled to capacity, with two students per seat, and an average of 24 seats on a bus, this loophole in the Ohio Revised Code subjects 72,000 student records to risk of public availability annually.

In the age we live in, safety conscientiousness is of the essence. Identity theft is at an all-time high, and unfortunately parents in our society must have a tireless awareness of where their children are, with whom they interact, and who has access to their personal information. Our parents do the best job that they can to ensure the safety of their children and the potential of their futures.

We as a legislature have a responsibility to help protect this reasonable expectation of privacy. Representative Rezabek and I believe that to fully protect the futures of our children, we need to ensure that they do not fall victim to heartless crimes. For this reason, we are moving to secure the records of our children, and ensure that their information is not compromised through the fault of a poor school bus driver or careless motorist.

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For clarity, this bill does nothing to redact the information of any legal adult, the operator of the school bus, or any other motor vehicle involved in the accident. This piece of legislation only addresses the records of minors as passengers in these accidents. For law enforcement purposes, a minor's information will still be kept as a record, but only redacted when the law enforcement agency releases accident information publically.

In conclusion, this bill is about protecting our most vulnerable constituents and bring about common sense reforms to Public Records Law. I want to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 8. Representative Rezabek and I would be happy to answer any questions the committee may have.