



**Education Center ★ P.O. Box 5381 ★ Cincinnati, OH 45201-5381
Office of the Superintendent**

Testimony to the House Primary and Secondary Education Finance Committee
Mary Ronan, Cincinnati Public Schools Superintendent
March 29, 2017

Chairman Cupp, Ranking Minority Member Miller and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee of Finance, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on HB 49 and the importance of restoring the state operating subsidy to Educational Service Centers. I am Mary Ronan, the Superintendent of Cincinnati Public Schools.

It is my understanding that questions have been raised as to the need of urban districts to align with an Educational Service Center (ESC) in the same fashion as smaller, rural school districts. I will outline below why I believe districts over 16,000 students should have the same ability as other districts to continue to utilize ESC services.

In 2010 when the Ohio General Assembly changed the Ohio Revised Code and granted school districts the ability to choose the ESC from which they want to receive services, the legislature did not require districts with student enrollments of 16,000 or more, but rather made it permissive to align with an ESC. The Cincinnati Public School District was the first large urban district to choose an ESC alignment. This allowed Hamilton County ESC to receive state funding to support work in our district – we contribute to that funding through a required local deduction and additional fees for services.

Our alignment with the Hamilton County ESC was one of the best decisions we've made. We are the only urban district to ever receive a rating of effective and we credit part of that success to our partnership with the ESC. For us, the partnership is not just about achieving economies of scale, it is also about tapping into the knowledge and expertise of the ESC educational support personnel to help drive improved academic outcomes for our students.

On a daily basis we have over 70 Hamilton County ESC employees in our buildings. Over 40 of those are school improvement coaches/consultants who work in schools and classrooms on a part-time or full-time embedded basis. They work side-by-side with teachers and administrators, offering resources, co-planning, co-teaching, providing feedback and meeting whatever particular needs arise. These coaches-work with content-area teachers on curriculum and instruction. They help implement school-wide initiatives, from things like literacy across the curriculum to positive behavior intervention programs. We consider these individuals invaluable.

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We also rely on the ESC for Special Education supervision, Speech Language Pathology, Occupational Therapy and English as a Second Language services, among others.

The fact that the state provides the ESC with a per pupil state operating subsidy allows Cincinnati Public School District to receive much needed services from the ESC and at the same time spend local tax dollars on educating our students who come to school with unique challenges simply because of their urban addresses. For the reasons outlined above, I urge the General Assembly to restore ESC funding and to retain the law as it currently reads allowing urban districts to take full advantage of the excellent programs and services offered by ESCs.

I am concerned that the executive budget continues to cut ESC funding. A cut to ESCs represents a cut to all districts.

I ask you to, at a minimum, restore ESC funding to its current levels. I also do not want the state officials directing how restore ESC funds are spent. Each district needs to determine locally what services they need from their restore ESC based on their students' needs. Finally, school improvement funds should not be allocated on a competitive basis.

Thank you for accepting my written testimony and I apologize for not being able to deliver it personally.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mary A. Ronan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mary" and last name "Ronan" clearly distinguishable.

Mary A. Ronan
Superintendent