

Testimony to the House Primary and Secondary Education Finance Committee

Rob Amodio, Norwood City School Superintendent

March 30, 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 testify on HB 49. Today I want to focus my comments on funding for educational service centers.

Norwood is an urban Hamilton County school district of 1,980 students with an excellent report card rating. Of our graduates, 83% go on to college, certification programs or the armed forces. We are aligned to and receive services from the Hamilton County Educational Service Center.

Educational Service Centers are shared services. That is their delivery model. They allow districts to share specialists and expertise. ESCs broker people. Our district needs speech language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists and special education supervisors. But I don't need these people as full time staff nor could we afford them on our payroll full time. Hamilton County ESC employs these professionals and I am able to obtain these services as needed.

ESCs also have the capacity to identify, develop, and replicate successful programs that small districts might otherwise be unable to offer on their own. Three years ago Hamilton County ESC was the lead for a four district Straight A grant targeted towards struggling students. Norwood City was one of those districts and our results are truly innovative. Other services we receive from HCESC include technology support specialists, computer network support systems, student intervention services, instructional professional development support services and child nutrition management services.

It's a partnership and it works. What doesn't work is the state continuing to cut ESC funding. Norwood City Schools needs these services and we will continue to rely on our ESC for these services, but if the state reduces the operating subsidy for ESCs, my taxpayers will now have to foot the bill. Norwood City School District is slated to receive a 0.8% increase in the executive budget. The math does not work.

I urge you to restore the ESC operating subsidy to the current level of \$41.6 million. However, as the Buckeye Association of School Administrators pointed out in its testimony, this is over a 33% cut from when ESCs were created. Districts need ESC services and we need to remember that ESCs roll out Ohio Department of Education initiatives concerning school improvement, the Ohio Improvement Process and professional development. Initiatives that the state has neither the capacity, nor the expertise to provide to the field.

I also ask you to remove the language giving the State Superintendent of Public Instruction the authority to determine how ESCs spend their subsidy. It's my understanding that Superintendent DeMaria did not ask for this authority and I am grateful that he realizes that locals know what services they need more than the state does.

NORWOOD CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

ROB AMODIO, SUPERINTENDENT



Go Indians!

Quite frankly, I need our ESC. We work well together. Small districts cannot do all the work required of us on our own. It just doesn't make sense to cut ESC funding.

Thank you for your time and attention and I am happy to answer your questions.

Rob Amodio
Superintendent
Norwood City School District