

Chairwoman Lehner, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts with the Committee today. My name is Brittany Alexander and I am speaking in support of SB39 as a professional educator and an Ohio BAT. The provisions of SB39 just make sense. They are included as basic requirements of our traditional public schools. It is imperative that all schools receiving state dollars be held to the same accountability and transparency standards.

Take for example the most basic, the provision that requires e-schools comply with all attendance requirements and standards established by the State Board. Of course compulsory education requires attendance standards. Of course all schools receiving state dollars should comply with state requirements for attendance, including e-schools. Each day, I am required to report the attendance for students in my homeroom class. As a professional, I record attendance in each class period of my day. It is quite simple to understand why I need to do this: I will need to connect with the students who missed my class and help them to get caught up. Another sensible accountability measure in SB39 is the requirement that e-schools keep accurate records of active participation by their students. We use Canvas as our online learning management system since our district has gone to students having district-issued tablets. As a teacher, I can easily see time stamps for my students' work submissions. Certainly, an online system for an e-school would allow for even more sophisticated tracking of student engagement. Students do not progress as expected if they are not in attendance or engaged in learning. It also makes sense to require a parent-teacher conference when a student's performance slips below expectation. This is yet another common expectation for those of us who devote our lives to teaching our young people. Of course I contact parents when I am concerned about their child's performance. I do not even do this out of a sense of legal obligation, but what I feel I owe to my students, their families, and our society as a whole. It is part of what professionals do.

SB39 also provides important transparency requirements for e-schools. The e-school boards' meetings should absolutely be publicly available. That this is not already happening is unacceptable. I can easily attend and retrieve documents from my school board's meetings because of open meeting laws. Why should this not apply to e-school governing bodies? Transparency in e-schools' advertisements is necessary, as they are proliferating. It is only right to require a disclaimer for an e-school's corresponding latest state report card grade along with their sales pitch in their ads. These provisions would afford parents of students in e-schools, and taxpayers as a whole, full disclosure and an opportunity for participation in decisions that affect students.

There should not be state dollars flowing to schools that do not follow the state's own mandates. I humbly submit to you that we could do so much more to improve the education system in Ohio if we had full, equitable, and constitutional school funding and if we stopped the heavy-handed accountability measures wherever allowable by federal laws. Short of that, we need a level playing field in accountability and transparency with all Ohio schools including charter schools, e-schools, and vouchers. SB39 will help us get to that first important step. I strongly urge your support for this bill. Thank you again for your time, Senators.