**Senate Education Committee**

**Senate Bill 216 (College Credit Plus)**

Matt Sheridan- Superintendent Crooksville Exempted Village Schools

December 13, 2017

Good morning Chairwoman Lehner, Vice Chairman Huffman, and committee members.

I am Matt Sheridan, the superintendent of Crooksville Exempted Village Schools. Thank you for providing me the opportunity to explain the impact that SB 216 will have upon my district, specifically in regards to College Credit Plus. Crooksville Exempted Village School district is an economically distressed rural district made up of roughly 1,000 students in 42 square miles of Perry County. For frame of reference, we are about 25 minutes south of Zanesville. According to the Office of Policy, Research and Strategic Planning’s most recent profile of Perry County, 60.5% of the population lives at 200% of the poverty level or more. Additionally, less than 10% of the county’s population, aged 25 or older, hold a Bachelor’s degree or higher level of education. Due to our high poverty rate, Crooksville Exempted Village Schools participates in the Community Eligibility Provision to allow all of our students to receive free breakfast and lunch and therefore all of our students are coded as economically disadvantaged.

Even before the College Credit Plus requirements, in 2012, we partnered with two neighboring schools districts and two institutions of higher education to create an early college high school to provide college credits to our students. Since then, we have continued to grow our College Credit Plus offerings with the help of a collaborative Straight A Grant where Crooksville Exempted Village Schools received $394,000 to credential teachers.

During the 2016-2017 school year, we were able to offer 22 different College Credit Plus Classes on our campus taught by our staff to our students, enabling our students the opportunity to earn 78 unique college credit hours all without leaving our high school campus. Last year, if these students had completed these 278 college credits on the college campuses where they earned these credits as a college freshman, they would have spent over $100,000.00 collectively. These numbers are amazing for a high school with only 262 students and twenty teachers on our high school campus. The program has not only provided a massive cost savings to the families of our students, it has also shown our students they can be successful in college as the vast majority of grades our students earn in these classes are A’s and B’s. This school year we are working hard to expand these offerings.

For our district, College Credit Plus has been an enormous success. We have also worked hard to find the right college partners and negotiate costs per credit hour below the floor in an attempt to be as fiscally responsible as possible. Even though the program has been a success, there is always room for improvement.

Although I have several suggestions, I will limit my comments to two of them recommended in SB 216. First, I am strongly in favor of requiring a student who desires to take a College Credit Plus Class that is offered on both the college campus or online by the college and at the student’s home school to take the class at the student’s home school unless the superintendent waives this requirement due to capacity limits of the class. There are a plethora of reasons for this suggestion. One is that students tend to be more successful on our high school campuses through College Credit Plus than they would have been taking classes on the college campus. While they are still on our campus, we make sure they attend class and keep in constant contact with the student and parent concerning grades. Additionally, the student is still able to experience the high school social atmosphere to help in their maturation process and it makes it much easier for the student to continue to participate in the arts and extra curricular programming which helps make meaningful high school experiences for many of our students. In addition, this requirement is a cost savings to the student’s home district. If the district is already paying the overhead in terms of teacher salary and classroom space to offer the class, it does not make sense to pay a third party to offer redundancy for programming in which taxpayers have already incurred the costs.

My second suggestion is to require families who are not economically disadvantaged to pay for half the cost of college textbooks and the other half to be paid by the home school of the student. Although this change will not specifically benefit my district, as all of our students are coded as economically disadvantaged, it should greatly help other districts. Despite incurring half the cost of textbooks, the families will still have significant savings in not incurring any cost per credit hour or paying for the other half of the textbook costs. Under the current College Credit Plus funding model, the families receive all the benefits at no costs. The local school districts and taxpayers are currently paying for these benefits. Asking the families to pay for part of the textbook costs is a reasonable expense for the large benefit their students receive. Additionally, if these families incur some costs, they are also more likely to ensure their students take this opportunity seriously because they are helping to fund a portion of it. Although I recognize College Credit Plus is an excellent opportunity for students, it is an unfunded mandate for local school districts. Any relief from these expenses, including partnering with families, who have the capacity to do so, to pay for the cost of textbooks, would be beneficial to local school districts.

Please take these suggestions into consideration when considering possible changes to College Credit Plus through SB 216.