Chairperson Lehner, Vice-Chairman Huffman and Honorable Members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for allowing me to address you today.

My name is Michael King and I am currently the Principal at Berkshire Jr/Sr High School in Geauga County. Berkshire Local Schools encompass the Burton, Claridon, and Thompson communities to name a few, we currently have an enrollment of just under 1,200 students.

I am proud to come here today and offer proponent testimony on behalf of the administrative team at Berkshire Local Schools for Senate Bill 216. This bill is a great acknowledgement that folks like you in prominent positions to effect substantive change are indeed listening to those of us who care for and educate Ohio’s future on a daily basis.

While we find the bill in total well written, the following points are significant to us at Berkshire:

Teacher licensure-

As we are a smaller district we have many teachers who are the only teacher for their grade level in Berkshire High School which houses grades 7-12. We very much in favor of grade band expansion in existing teacher licensure as in when a school might have an accomplished Social Studies teacher with a grades 5-9 license who knows the content of the 10th grade however because there is an arbitrary grade level cut-off the teacher is excluded from the opportunity instructing that grade level. Under SB 216, the Superintendent can sign off on minor grade level flexibility based on life experience. This coupled with the expansion of grade bands on licensure for future teachers would allow us to expand our course offerings and enrich the academic opportunities of our students in the core and rigorous electives with educators that we already know have built strong relationships with our students and have high expectations for student achievement.

Teacher evaluation-

We strongly support the state generated rubric for the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES). The OTES rubric is a rigorous evaluation document and accounts well for various teaching styles, delivery methods, student development, and professionalism. The rubric is a quality stand-alone product for educator review. Student growth measures are accounted for daily in quality instruction as spelled out within the many facets of the OTES rubric.

N-size-

Possibly one of the trickiest pieces of this legislation is the discussion surrounding N-size. We agree with the bill to move the N size back to 30. Lowering the N size to 15 makes achievement in the subgroup almost impossible, near perfection would be necessary. There is also the increased risk of statistical variability and volatility. Lastly in the n-size discussion, but possibly most important, a student could easily lose confidentiality (in a small group it would be easy to tell who scored what, especially if the student is part of several different N groups), thus by following the N-size rule of 15 many districts could be violating FERPA at the direction of the state.

Student management and safety-

My original testimony was to end here. However today (December 11th) I had a phone call from a distraught parent due to the forced parental notification for excused absences. The call was from the 3rd set of parents so far this year. I have also had the discussion with in person with others. The students that we have in this category are receiving life-saving medical treatment, and the parents have shared that these notifications are another painful reminder of what their child is experiencing at no fault of their own. I can only imagine how many students and parents this is affecting in larger districts.

Chairman Lerner, I thank you for the opportunity to share this testimony on behalf of Berkshire Local Schools. We believe that this bill is critical in creating positive and substantive change in public school systems throughout Ohio. Should you have any questions I would be happy to answer them or even better yet we would love for any or all of you to come up and visit us in Berkshire Badger Country!