April 11, 2018

Chairwoman Peggy Lehner

Senate Education Committee

1 Capitol Square, 1st Floor

Columbus, OH 43215

Chairwoman Lehner, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Ohio Senate Education Committee. My name is Andrew Minton and I am the lobbyist for K12. I am here to testify in support of HB 21 and specifically to speak to language we are seeking to amend into the bill.

HB 21 makes common sense reforms to the verification of student residency records without overburdening community schools. It will help to streamline the verification process and increase accountability in school funding. We appreciate Representative Hambley’s leadership on this issue and his willingness to bring everyone to the table throughout the process.

In addition to the language before you, I would like to speak to an amendment that I’d like the committee to consider. Language has not been finalized as we continue to work with stakeholders and LSC on a new draft. To that end, I will discuss the overarching goal of the amendment.

Last fall, Ohio’s largest e-school suspended operations and displaced the over 12,000 students enrolled. This means that in 80 of Ohio’s 88 counties, OHVA may be the only school choice option for students. While we understand these students have enrolled in many schools across the state, OHVA and it’s board, with the full support of K12, stepped up to be the answer for these students. As of now, OHVA has enrolled over 4,200 ECOT students. Instead of enrolling these students until the proper ratio’s were met, K12 and OHVA decided that hiring new teachers and dedicating countless resources to this crisis was the right thing to do for these students and families. I think it is also important that you know each of these new students will cost approximately $1,400 or a total of $5,880,000. K12 is working with OHVA to cover the entire expense.

Additionally, OHVA has not received transcripts for all of these students and many have incomplete records. Because OHVA and many other schools cannot readily see how far some of these students are behind we feel the following amendment is justified. We are proposing language that would allow for any school that enrolled ECOT students to be exempt from academic accountability standards under section 3302.03 and from counting toward the closure law for the academic years of 17/18 and 18/19. It is our intention to only apply this exemption for students enrolling as juniors and seniors. We feel this language is justified given the insufficient student records and it’s narrowly tailored nature.

K12 and OHVA understand how important school choice is to these students and are dedicated to making sure they succeed in an online environment. Students choose e-schools for a multitude of reasons, but one common reason is that a brick and mortar school does not suit their needs. With over 4,200 new enrollees, it is clear that many of these students rely on an e-school education and more importantly; they still have a school of choice.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 21 and the proposed amendment. I would be happy to address any questions at this time.

Sincerely,

Andrew Minton