

Chairman Wiggam, Vice-Chair Stephens, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the State and Local Government Committee:

I am testifying as the Superintendent of the Hilliard City School District, Ohio's 8th largest district, in opposition to SB 311.

Ohio is a diverse, complex state. We are representative of our country; from big cities to rural towns, from global technology hubs to small family farms, we are all proud to be Buckeyes.

As a local control state, many decisions are best made by the elected officials and public servants at the local level. Ohio's county commissioners, school boards, and town councils make the vast majority of Ohio citizens' decisions.

There are times when we need strong, unified leadership for Ohio. When all Ohioans' health and safety is at stake, when a state-wide lens is required for perspective, our Governor must have the authority to lead Ohio. During our current Covid-19 crisis, Governor DeWine has provided stable, unified leadership for Ohioans. He has kept us informed, shared important information, and made difficult decisions.

One example of where a state-wide mandate has made a significant difference is in our public schools. Governor DeWine's leadership with a mask mandate has created a safe environment for our students. There is little evidence of viral spread in our schools from districts in High Indecent Counties, such as Franklin and Butler. Just yesterday, the Health Commissioners in Franklin County and Columbus Public Health issued a "Stay at Home Advisory" but advised schools to remain in their current learning mode. To some, this is counterintuitive, but the data is clear. Students are safe in our Franklin County Schools. Through our partnership with The Ohio State University, our data in the Hilliard Schools demonstrates no evidence of community spread in our classrooms. Ohio's public school students are safer because we have a unified, state-wide mandate for masks. Our students are safer because of Governor DeWine's resolute leadership.

We must look past this health crisis; we must have a forward-facing vision for the future. Difficult decisions now will lead to a brighter future tomorrow. A vaccine is coming; we have faith and hope for tomorrow. Under Governor DeWine's unifying leadership, we can build a bridge from today's challenges to tomorrow's success. Without a steadfast leader, the patchwork policies from local officials leave us all vulnerable. Without strong leadership, Ohioans are at greater risk.

When our family members from across this great state need advanced medical care, they go to hospitals in Columbus, Cincinnati, and Cleveland. In this situation, during a health emergency, citizens' actions in Knox and Marion County directly impact Franklin County people. We are one Ohio, and we need one strategy to defeat this virus.

I urge our leaders in the General Assembly to pause for a moment, consider the sacrifices we have all made during this pandemic, and come together as one Ohio. Communication and collaboration are essential in any successful government. There are times that difficult, unpopular decisions are required to achieve the desired goal. When decisive leadership is needed, we need a strong Governor with authority to lead us as one Ohio.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dr. John C. Marschhausen

Superintendent, Hilliard City Schools