Good Afternoon

My name is Julie Garcia and I am a teacher in the Lorain City School District. I have 29 years of teaching experience in Lorain City Schools, have lived in the city of Lorain my entire life, and am a proud Alum of Lorain City Schools.

Before the implementation of HB70, our district was beginning to see improvement.

But now, our academics are suffering! Every building has become and isolated island unto itself and there is no district standard. Instead of using board adopted and teacher selected curriculum, each building is simply being told to teach whatever the Dean of Academics orders.

When my students leave my classroom for a different school in the district, they will be introduced to something completely new regarding reading and math. While this is obviously not good for any student, it is especially difficult for students in Lorain, where many families are transient and educational consistency is needed to help students stay on a path towards success.

Recently, a new reading curriculum has been selected with minimal input from teachers. The teachers who were asked to evaluate it had to do so without a working knowledge of the program and minimal time to discuss other options. It seems that student success is not the motivation behind the choice of our new reading program.

Despite what has been said, as a teacher working in Lorain City Schools I have seen nothing positive come from the presences of HB70, and unfortunately our students have been the biggest victims.

Since its implementation, we have lost instructional interventions that are greatly needed for our students learning. Our Title 1 program is nonexistent; my intervention group currently stands at 20 plus students. When I expressed concern over this, a district chief told me that our building would not be getting anyone to help with intervention. Instead we were told that the Accelerated Reader computer program would count as our intervention. When teachers inquired about this, we learned that the funds designated to support Title 1 and intervention teachers, were instead used to hire 58 new administrators. None of whom have any student contact.

Outside of the classroom, student behavior is out of control. Principals are more worried about the data shared on their Big Boards, and since that data is used to evaluate the administrators. They’ve become less concerned with handling classroom incidents. So students who disrupt instruction, vandalize, and attack others students are repeatedly returned to the classroom with no consequences. When other students see this they realize that despite this unacceptable behavior, there are no consequences for students actions, and thus we’ve seen a continuously negative culture of behavior develop.

Many of our young and talented teachers are seeking jobs outside of the Lorain School District. They’re are afraid to speak out about inequities equipment that doesn’t work, and a lack of simple things such as books, lockers, paper, basic necessities needed to create a functioning classroom. They fear being targeted by our administration for participating in things such as OEA sponsored lobby days or meetings like this one.

Since HB70 school administrators and chiefs have continuously bullied our teachers and many are afraid to make reports for fear of retaliation. Those who have come forward are targeted or bullied by administrators and they fear their OTES evaluation will be held hostage for their reporting. Over the last few months, Teacher morale has plummeted and many have stated that they would leave Lorain Schools if they could.

HB70 is an injustice against districts of poverty and students of color. Repealing HB70 is the first step to help our community, teachers and students move forward towards success. I ask that you keep the HB 154 language in the state budget.

As Dr. Martin Luther King said, “The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.”

HB70 is extremely controversial and repealing it will take you out of your comfort zone. But I ask you, is being comfortable more important than providing the children of Lorain, Youngstown, East Cleveland and other districts with a quality education in a safe and positive environment?