**Senate Testimony: Steve Cawthon: Lorain ADC/Teacher**

**Thursday June 13, 2019 2:30pm**

**Chairwoman Lehnar, Vice Chair Terhar, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Senate Education Committee.**

**It is great to see all of you once again and thank you for allowing me to testify this afternoon. My name is Steve Cawthon; again I am a member of the Lorain Academic Distress Commission appointed by the board of education as the teacher representative. As a proud educator since 1991 and parent of a Lorain City Schools graduate, it troubles me to see what is happening in Lorain and across Ohio. Our community has been adversely effected by the disenfranchising legislation known as HB70, which creates ADC’s and the CEO state take over model. As I stated in my previous testimony, I strongly support legislation that will return local control to districts and allow for true collaboration between communities and the state of Ohio. What came out of the Senate on Tuesday was in a word, disappointing.**

**The phrase HB 70 2.0 has been coined when describing the new “school transformation board” plan that would be created by the Senate proposal. There are some troubling components of the plan that jump out. It appears that there is an additional level of bureaucracy being created as the ODE “shall conduct a request for information to aid in creating a list of approved school improvement organizations.” The price tag of this is concerning as the first year the ODE pays 100% of these services, the 2nd year it’s a 50/50 split and the 3rd year it falls to the local district to pay 100%. It ponders the question, who would these organizations be and how much would they be making off the students and communities of our state? Those funds would be better utilized with wrap around services for students and investments in local districts. Also under this new plan, the new commission would have 6 members with 3 appointees by the state superintendent, one member appointed by the mayor from the business community, the school board president and one member appointed by the teacher union president but the teacher would be non-voting member. A person who actually is an educator would not have a voting voice in a school turnaround plan? That is beyond troubling to me.**

**Also and maybe the most disturbing piece is that the CEO is now being replaced with a “school improvement director.” In looking at pgs. 22-23 letters (a)-(q), it sounds very much like a CEO that was in HB70 with overbearing & enormous powers such as modifying policies, procedures, the working environment, contracts and collective bargaining rights. As Lord Acton, a British historian once said, “Absolute power corrupts absolutely.” It seems that the Senate proposal to deal with ineffective state take overs is just more of the same and maybe worse. Local control is part of the fiber of the American ideology that our Founding Fathers so cherished. So instead of adding more bureaucracy and state control, implement positive and collective change with local school districts and the ODE working together as partners.**

**The idea of using local tax dollars without true local oversight in its own district is Un-American. As well intentioned as this process may have been, it has resulted in discord and dysfunction. The ADC model is flawed and creates acrimony. In fact, State Superintendent, Paolo DeMaria has commented that HB 70, has “too much hostility and too many “challenges” to work well and by having the state impose itself on districts, instead of working with them to bring change, too much acrimony is created.”**

**It’s time to end this flawed experiment and for the Senate to do the right thing. This also means not replacing HB 70 with another state take over model with a new name like the State Transformation Board that will invite charters, big money and entities who attempt to use their “magic potion” to fix us.**

**What should we do to heal the wounds of HB70? “A Common Sense” approach.**

\***Restore Local Control with Checks and Balances:** Hostile takeovers have not worked.

\***Build Trust in the school community**:

New leadership is necessary. The lack of experience, credentials and professional leadership

skills have hurt our students and has fostered a sense of low morale throughout the district.

**\*Provide Wrap Around Services**: Hire more social workers, counselors, medical professionals

and individuals that can help our students.

**\*Institute Smaller Class Sizes:** This will help to deal with the dynamic needs of our students.

**\*Improve Safety/Discipline:** Develop proper structure and consistency in the school

environment. The increase in violence/misbehavior/disrespect has been alarming.

**\*Strengthen Curriculum**: Needs to be evaluated, the lack of cohesion, pacing, consistency,

materials and resources have contributed to major issues across LCS.

\***Restructure the State Testing Model:** It is dysfunctional and needs to be fixed to help

improve the student’s educational experience in Ohio’s schools.

**\*and Help support local school districts instead of punishing them.**

These common sense ideas would be a great start to an academic renaissance in the Buckeye state.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote to end HB 70 and support effective legislation that will restore collaboration for public education in Ohio. Our schools should have a fair and impartial opportunity to allow their unique social and economic realities to shape the structures that will allow their districts to prosper. Remember that school districts are communities, and the time for community take overs has passed**.** Let’s work together to make our public education experience a model for the rest of our great nation to follow. The House has already voiced their thoughts on the issue with the overwhelming passage of HB 154 and I ask this body along with Governor DeWine to be on the right side of history with public education in Ohio and leave a lasting legacy that all Ohioans can be proud of and not leave us with another “American Tragedy.”

Thank you.