

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Burke, Ranking Member Fedor and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to submit interested party testimony on House Bill 166. My name is Brian Murphy and I currently serve as the Transformational Leader of Strategic Planning in Toledo Public Schools (TPS). In TPS, a comprehensive strategic planning approach began in 2014 through the leadership of the current board and superintendent of TPS. Implementation in a mid-large district is most effective when the board, superintendent, district leaders, teachers, and unions collaboratively work together through a system of shared accountability. The process of engagement from board and staff through the board committee structure allows for a system of effective communication and accountability at all levels.

In TPS, we have an elected school board and superintendent that have a proven track record of implementing change and reform, through the collaboration of all stakeholders, which includes parent and community engagement. This success comes with the overwhelming support of the Toledo community that includes parents, faith based community, local business leaders, labor unions, and all other stakeholders. The community watch dog groups, who have always been critical and contrary to district operations and performance, are now supporters of the district.

In TPS, we have made tremendous strides under the leadership of our current Superintendent and Board of Education. Our district has increased graduation rates since 2014, from 64% to 79% overall, from 60% to 80% for African-American students, from 59% to 77% for economically disadvantaged students and from 54% to 70% for students with disabilities. The district has improved 3rd grade promotion rates from 71.9% to 85% since 2015. During this same period, we have increased enrollment in TPS schools by over 1,700 students after having a significant decline in enrollment for 20 plus consecutive years. The community has witnessed our progress and success; and therefore passed five (5) consecutive new or renewed levies during this time.

What MUST be understood is that we serve a Toledo community that has been overcome with poverty and all of the challenges that come with it. TPS has more than 2,700 homeless students and 86% of our students on free or reduced lunch. However, regardless of the challenges our district continues to defy the odds and show growth with the academic performance of our students and community.

Hours of research regarding a state takeover model tells me that most districts show poorer performance, school dysfunction, and a significant lack of confidence in the public education system from the local community. Accountability with schools districts must be evident, but not through an Academic Distress Commission that strips the power of local control from the elected officials and the superintendent. I challenge you to find an Academic Distress Commission or those positions appointed by the Academic Distress Commission that have the passion, commitment, dedication, and success of our current school board, superintendent, and staff. It will not happen. Therefore, stripping local control would damage the Toledo community more than you know.

Eliminating the ADC, returning the authority to locally elected officials, and working in collaboration with local school districts that have a record of proven success is the best option for student success.