Good Afternoon.

My name is Don Berringer, and I am a public school teacher in Northeast Ohio. I have a B.A. in History, and an M.A. in Educational Administration. I have a Middle Childhood Education License (grades 4-9) in Social Studies and Math, as well as my Principal's License. Finally, I have a Pupil Activity Permit through the Ohio Department of Education.

I currently teach seventh grade math, and have been the middle school softball coach for the past five years. I will be entering my 20th year working in public education.

Today, I am writing in support of Ohio HB 154, the full repeal of Ohio HB 70, and against the amendment to Ohio HB 166, which would set up education "commissions" to oversee failing school districts.

HB 154 passed by a margin of 82-12 (87% support) in the Ohio House last month. That is a very large majority who saw the past, and current, mistakes of HB 70, which led to the state takeovers of three districts, starting with Youngstown. The Ohio House realized their error of four years ago, and overwhelmingly decided to fix it.

The State Board of Education is in favor of repealing HB 70 (Youngstown Vindicator, May 21, 2019). Editorial writers of various newspapers across the state are in favor of repeal, as well. However, once again it seems that a small group of politicians is trying to tell all of us in favor of HB 154, and against HB 70 and the amendment to HB 166, that they know better than everyone else.

I am sure intentions were nothing but wonderful. However, as is often the case in education, there is not a "one size fits all" solution. What works in my classroom may not work in another classroom. What works at my building may not work at another building in the same district. What works in our district may not work in another district.

HB 70 has been used as a sword of Damocles over school districts, who, having no other choice, do the same to the teachers and principals of that district. The "new" plan does not eliminate the sword, it just raises it up a few inches.

HB 70 has been a morale killer among educators, with districts and teachers constantly worrying about whether or not we are going to be next on the takeover list.

Just think of the millions of dollars that the Senate Education Committee wants to spend on "consultants," and ask yourselves, "How many teachers/tutors/counselors could these millions of dollars bring into struggling school districts?" Those are the people who have everyday interactions with the various students who are struggling. An extra layer of bureaucracy (the consultant) may not have that everyday, personal connection.

Republicans are supposed to be for smaller, limited government, with individual and/or local control in as many situations as possible. But the tentacles of state government are all over education. Do state lawmakers dictate how electricians do their jobs? Should a person with zero experience in how to properly wire a house tell an electrician what they are doing "wrong?" Should a person without a medical background tell a cardio-vascular surgeon how to better perform heart surgery? I think we all know the answers to those two questions. However, there are an unfortunately high number of politicians who tell school teachers, and administrators, how to better do our jobs.

The Ohio House made the right choice in passing HB 154, and repealing HB 70. I urge the members of the Senate Education Committee not to start off on another mistaken path, much like was taken four years ago.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the discussion.