Chairwoman Lehner, Vice Chair Terhar, Ranking Member Fedor and members of the Senate Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony on House Bill (HB) 154. I am Patrick Schymanski, a school board member and Legislative Liaison for the Elida Local Schools. I am also on both the OSBA NW District Council and a member of the National School Boards Association (NSBA) Federal Relations Network, a legislative advocacy for national educational legislation. To be honest, I do have some mixed feelings about HB 1545. I generally support the House version, but I do find the concept of a transformation council and a transformation plan somewhat intriguing.

In general, I find the testimony from the Ohio School Boards Association (OSBA), The Buckeye Association of School Administrators (BASA) and the Ohio Association of School Business Officials (OSABO), a good starting point in the approach to address schools with struggling academic issues. I take issue not with the thought of a Transformation Committee but with the direction that it is a School Transformation process.

I would urge this committee to research School systems where the state has taken over school management from a local school board. My research has not found ONE successful takeover. Not only here in Ohio are the schools with an Academic Distress Commission Leadership not improving but, look at Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia, Nashville or St. Louis. All returned to local school board authority have years of unsuccessful (in my opinion) state appointed leadership. I suggest, the issue is not leadership of the school system but a fault in the assumption of the root cause of the academic struggling.

We can all agree that the school systems currently in Academic Distress and those who are close to requiring intervention are struggling with academic reporting and results based on state testing. If we think statistically, the proposed solution or theory is that changing the school leadership to a business model with a CEO will fix the academic problems. In statistics, the way a theory is proved is not by assuming the theory is correct and implementing the theory but by testing the theory and looking for what is called the Null Hypothesis; that is trying to prove the theory wrong. If data can find fault with the theory or hypothesis, then the original theory must be discarded or modified and tested again. Since the schools in Ohio on Academic Distress as well as schools in other states are not showing significant improvement perhaps the assumption that the root cause of school grade card failures is not school governance but something else.

Therefore, I do like the Transformation Board but it, in my opinion, must be a Community Transformation Board. We do know that academic studies show the greater the parental involvement the better students do. We also know from information published by the magazine “Education Week” in its (Quality Counts 2019” that where you live matters. In fact, this magazine generally rates the northeastern part of the USA higher in educational attainment and funding than the rest of the country. Generally, as you go both South or West, educational attainment and test results are not as successful as the NE section of our country. The data shows that the NE USA has higher income and higher overall educational degrees in the NE. In one sense we can say, they value education more by pursuing degrees past secondary schooling. I am not trying to criticize parents. The work in the NE does require more advanced education that say, the farming and manufacturing sectors here in Ohio. But, the correlation between higher income and more families with advanced degrees is statistically significant.

Therefore, I urge this committee to keep much of the HB intact as submitted by the House. I would like to see the Transformation concept retained but as a city or county transformation board, working with the Mayor, County Commissioners and perhaps the local economic development board to address; Poverty, Unemployment, Opioid Abuse, Trauma and Mental Health.

I truly believe the solution rests not with addressing school governance but the larger picture, the struggling community. If we can improve the community, I believe that school educational attainment will also improve.

Respectfully,

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