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Committees

Ways and Means, *Vice Chair*
Education
Insurance and Financial
Institutions
Finance Subcommittee on Primary
and Secondary Education

Chairwoman Lehner, Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Fedor, and Members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 292. This bill will allow Ohio's online community schools to create individualized student engagement plans, and will give these online schools the ability to withdraw a student who does not follow the criteria laid out in the engagement plan.

In an effort to strengthen e-schools, giving them this withdrawal ability will be immensely helpful. Although a rare occurrence, there are students and families who know the student is close to crossing the "habitual truant" threshold of unexcused absences and attempt to game the system without consequence. These students will wait until they are close to the truancy mark and then log back in to complete an assignment, thus resetting the clock on truancy, and appearing as if they are meeting the required attendance hours.

Current law requires notice to the parents or guardians of a student that has 38 unexcused absent hours in a month or 65 hours in one school year. SB 292 changes the requirement for notice for e-school students to 30 unexcused hours in a semester. In addition to a notice, the school must develop a plan that clearly informs the student of consequences when they fail to engage.

E-schools do a fantastic job for thousands of students, but the taxpayer dollars going to these students, may better serve them in a Drop Out Recovery and Prevention program, or perhaps even returning to a brick and mortar charter or traditional public school. Allowing this practice of avoiding habitual truancy is not merely a disservice to taxpayers, but the students themselves who continue to fall behind by missing lessons and schoolwork.

After making so many positive reforms for the community school sector over the previous General Assemblies, SB 292 is yet another change that will hold online schools accountable for the students they are educating, while also giving them the flexibility they need to withdraw students who do not engage.

Thank you for your consideration of Senate Bill 292. I am happy to answer any questions the committee may have.