



Testimony Submitted to the Senate Education Committee, Chair Peggy Lehner

Support for SB 350

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Chairwoman Lehner, Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Senate Education Committee, my name is Jennifer Schorr and I am the Associate Director of the Education Division of Buckeye Community Hope Foundation. I am grateful for the opportunity to provide this testimony today on behalf of my organization. Buckeye Community Hope Foundation is a statewide sponsor of 47 community schools serving over 14,000 students across 11 cities in Ohio. We are rated Exemplary by the Ohio Department of Education.

As stated in a communication dated July 8, 2020 from Superintendent of Public Instruction, Paolo DeMaria to all public school Superintendents, "Each year with the start of school, the Ohio Department of Education receives a significant number of complaints related to compliance with the pupil transportation requirements of state law. This situation stands to be exacerbated in light of the present circumstances related to reopening of schools in the midst of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Traditional public schools are legally responsible for the transportation of not only their own students, but eligible students who reside in the district and who attend community schools and chartered nonpublic schools. Nothing in state law allows a school district to prioritize the needs of its own students over the needs of community school or chartered nonpublic school students. Even so, we have already heard from some community schools and nonpublic schools who believe they are being treated with lesser consideration for their students' transportation needs."

While public transit may be appropriate for high school students and is currently used in some Districts, most would agree that this option is not appropriate for younger children. You may recall the passage of "Alianna Alert" legislation in response to the 2017 kidnapping, rape, torture and murder of 14-year-old Alianna DeFresse while using public transit to get to school. Her tragic case provides a stark reminder of potential threats young students may face at bus stops in urban communities.

SB 350 provides further protection to non-District enrolled students to ensure they receive transportation to and from school that they are legally entitled to by requiring the Ohio Department of Education to monitor compliance, and deduct from the district's payment for student transportation the total daily amount of that payment for each day that the district is not in compliance. The Department currently does not have this capability to ensure compliance with the law.

We fully support the introduction of SB 350 and truly appreciate the additional safety and security it provides to our students, as well as empowering the Department to enforce what is already in law. We

all want to work together as we navigate the COVID-19 challenges related to transportation. This legislation allows us to do so in an equitable manner while keeping the health and safety of all students at the forefront.

Thank you for allowing me to provide this testimony, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have to ensure all students have the most barrier free opportunities to continue to learn and grow.