



Education Division

Testimony Submitted to the Senate Education Committee, Chair Peggy Lehner

Support for SB 358

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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.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify today. As you are aware, there are many challenging decisions that parents, schools and sponsors are making every day in order to maneuver unknown territory where often times, there is no clear answer or solution.

While Buckeye Community Hope Foundation supports the provisions in SB 358, I wanted to take the opportunity to raise additional concerns that are not addressed or need additional clarity in the current version of the proposed legislation. Our concerns and suggestions are as follows:

1. Allow schools to choose an alternative assessment to the OELPS English language proficiency screener to identify new English learners and receive funding to provide services to those students. This test must be given face-to-face and is tied to funding to be used to provide services to students. The Ohio Department of Education has stated that during the pandemic a school can use the Home Language Survey to identify students as an English Learner and provide services to that student, but schools will not receive any funding for those services if the identification was not done through the test. Schools simply cannot afford to provide these services with no funding. There are other assessments that could be used that do not require in-person testing. This affects all students newly enrolled in any public school in Ohio for 2020-2021 school year.
2. Waive the requirement of all schools to conduct health screenings prior to the first day of November of the school year in which a pupil is enrolled for the first time in either kindergarten or first grade for the 2020-2021 school year. We have heard from our schools and parents that even though schools have put in every possible precaution – parents are not willing to bring their young student into a building for a screening test.

3. Waive the administration of the required testing and participation rate thresholds for all Dropout Prevention and Recovery designated schools for the 2020-2021 school year. Ohio is still currently procuring a replacement to the NWEA MAP assessments for the Fall Administration, so not only do the Dropout Prevention and Recovery schools have to navigate all the same COVID-19 related challenges, they are currently required to administer a test that has not even been provided by the Department and ensure a 75% participation rate of in-person testing.
4. Require the Department of Education to conduct all Full-Time Equivalency (FTE) reviews for the 2020-2021 school year in alignment with each individual school's attendance policies and procedures as outlined in the school's current Remote Learning Plan. Community schools rely on attendance to determine funding. FTE reviews must be required to align to each individual schools' attendance requirements as outlined in their Remote Learning Plan provided to the Department.
5. Extend the ability of public bodies to hold and attend meetings, and conduct hearings by means of teleconference, video conference, or any other similar technology through June 30, 2021. The current enactment is in place until December 1, 2020. This will allow school boards the ability to safely and efficiently continue their daily operations while protecting their members, parents, and community members.

We fully support the introduction of SB 358 and truly appreciate the courtesy and flexibility this legislation provides all public schools, districts, and sponsors. We all strive to provide the best possible quality public education while keeping health and safety at the forefront. We feel this aligns with many other areas supported by the Legislature and the Ohio Department of Education during these incredibly challenging times.

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.