



EDUCATION  
COMMITTEE

Witness Form

Today's Date 12/7/20

Name: Jason Wood

Address: 310 N. Second Street Coldwater, OH 45828

Telephone: 419-678-2611

Organization Representing: Coldwater EVSD

Testifying on Bill Number: SB 388

Testimony:  Verbal  Written  Both

Testifying As:  Proponent  Opponent  Interested Party

Are you a Registered Lobbyist?  Yes  No

Special Requests: \_\_\_\_\_

**Senate Education Committee**

**Senate Bill 388 Testimony**

**Jason Wood, Superintendent Coldwater EVSD**

**December 8, 2020**

Chair Lehner, Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Senate Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today regarding Senate Bill (SB) 388. My name is Jason Wood and I am the superintendent of Coldwater Exempted Village School District located in Mercer County.

I am here as a proponent of SB 388. SB 388 permits a school district board of education to employ an individual as a substitute teacher according to the district's own educational requirements for the remainder of the 2020- 2021 school year. The bill also declares an emergency, which would allow this legislation to provide immediate help for ours and other school districts in Ohio.

The impact of the Coronavirus has created a smaller pool of substitutes in our county and across the state of Ohio. Several of our substitutes have decided to sit out this school year, as most are retired educators or have underlying health conditions. Coldwater EVSD and all Mercer County schools have delivered an in-person education so far this school year. Although we have not seen transmission of the virus at school, our biggest challenge is having enough substitutes to fill in for teachers to provide supervision. Our administrators, guidance counselors and teaching staff members have covered far more than an average year due to the shortage of substitutes this fall.

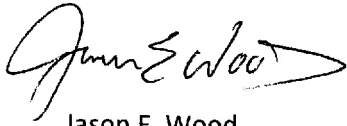
SB 388 should allow a local board of education to determine the requirements for substitutes that they will utilize for the remainder of the 2020-21 school year. One thing the bill does not specify is whether the State Board of Education must license the newly eligible substitutes employed under the bill. Currently, substitute licenses for subbing in grades K-12 are issued by ODE. I suggest that the bill be amended to clarify licensure requirements and allow for local decision-making and local Board of Education approval.

As you consider this bill, there are a few items to note. Other BIG 10 states have less stringent requirements for substitute teachers than Ohio. Our school provided technology has changed the role of the substitute as well. In our district, each student has access to a Chromebook or iPad. Our teachers record lessons and submit plans so the students can access the lessons in the absence of the teacher. Our teachers can still connect with the class via Zoom or Google to provide instruction, but a substitute is needed to be physically present in the classroom with the students to provide supervision.

SB 388 would help to resolve substitute issues for our school districts in Mercer County and the state of Ohio. I am concerned during the winter months that we may have to go remote due to a shortage of substitutes. It is my professional belief that the best education for our K -12 students is in-person education and involvement in extra-curricular activities for their mental health and well-being. Our students, staff and community have done a tremendous job of following our safety protocols. I ask committee members to act swiftly on SB 388 to provide relief as soon as possible for our school to

remain open for our students' safety and well-being. I am happy to answer any questions you might have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jason E. Wood". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Jason E. Wood

Superintendent of Coldwater EVSD