



Toledo Public Schools
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Proponent Testimony for House Bill 111, Stephanie Eichenberg, Toledo Public Schools

Chairwoman Lehner, Vice Chair Brenner and Ranking Member Fedor thank you for considering this testimony today.

While I would like to think that House Bill 111 is entirely unnecessary, my district's experience demonstrates otherwise. Delays in transmitting transcripts can not only cause problems for transferring students' placement, but ultimately delays can cause a student not to graduate. While some delays are simply due to sloppiness and lack of accountability, other delays are a version of pass the buck, where one school waits for another school to be their collections agency for overdue fines and fees.

While it may not seem significant if it takes 10 days rather than 5 or even better 2-3 days, when we place a Special Education student in the wrong classroom for any length of time in a new environment, we risk issues that could impact the safety of the student in question and the safety of the students and staff around that student. We will always experience different levels of parent engagement and understanding, and for students who are high mobility or changing guardians, the parental knowledge may simply be lacking to assist a school into placing a student correctly. Transcripts are an important piece of this puzzle and delays in transmission from the old school to the new school can create significant learning barriers. Unfortunately, a student leaving may not seem like a priority to the old school, so having a timeline within the law would assist with all parties to understand the acceptable timeline.

Frequently, we find that small fines are the reason a school or district is choosing to hold a transcript. This might seem like a convincing way to collect fees from students, but it transfers a time-wasting burden to the receiving school or district. Especially if a student is changing guardianship and schools at the same time, what are the chances the student's new guardian will be able to navigate paying the \$26 in supply fees that were never paid for student? I can tell you as a parent who is struggling to turn in my freshmen soccer player's uniform since we cannot have an in-person celebratory banquet this year, I may not even realize I still owe the school a uniform or a fee in 7 months if my daughter were to transfer schools. I would find out only when the new school says they need me to pay the old school, with the receiving school acting as collections for the sending school. How to collect the funds is the sending school's issue, it's should not be the receiving school's burden. It's not unusual when the fee is small but still a large enough to be an issue for an especially poor family, our Principals are taking cash out of their pocket and paying a student's bill personally, so they can get hold of a transcript and recognize their credits officially.

This issue of collections is magnified when students transfer from a voucher school where they've not paid the balance of their tuition. These students come to us without a transcript, and while their prior school accepted the state and district's funds through the voucher payment, the family was unable to meet the remaining balance. We have a local high school that does this to students each and every year, which makes me question how well they vet incoming student's ability to pay their portion. For them it's

not a problem, they simply hold the transcript hostage and expect the families to come up with the funds. They will carry a student for 2-3 years behind on their tuition balance, then cut them off when it's nearly impossible for the student to recover their credits for an on-time graduation. We are not allowed to credit classes without an official transcript so our district dollars are invested into credit recovery programs for these students, and our foundation partners and even our superintendent hit the fundraising streets to see if any donor will assist a student with their bill. This is a ridiculous transfer of accountability. When a school does this consistently, they have received their voucher dollars for the year or years the student was there, so it's not an entire loss for them. And since the school I referred to has 86% of their student body on vouchers, it seems like a cynical calculation that most families will pay, so why bother with extensive financial screening of voucher students? For some of these families if the school had simply asked for a statement of budget and evaluated it, it would be obvious the family could not afford the balance. But instead, they hold some students' transcripts each year counting on most families being desperate enough to do anything to see their student graduate, and also that they will benefit from my district raising funds for the students in this situation.

We have seen students in this last situation give up and drop out. Most galling, any late or lack of graduation is counted against us, the receiving district, simply because we can't recognize the credits the student has earned previously at their voucher school. How is this possible? Because we have regulation that says we cannot acknowledge an unofficial transcript for credit, but none that says when a school must send over a transcript.

Let's be student centered and ask schools to finish their work with a student when a student transfers. Please vote yes for House Bill 111.