

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Burke, Ranking Minority Member Sykes and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to submit interested party testimony on House Bill 166; specifically, directed to the language on proposed wrap-around services for schools.

Please accept the following:

Local districts to determine where proposed wrap-around services are needed. Involve local community and business supports. Focus on best practices from school districts with similar demographics. Provide strong support from the ODE prior to spending commitments.

The current budget language notes that additional funding for wrap-around services would be accounted for AFTER spending has occurred. Based upon the expected increase in spending of between \$250 and \$400 million, submission to and review of spending by ODE might be completed BEFORE expenditures are made; that is, if truly addressing the barriers to achievement that students in high poverty districts face is the goal. Appropriately focused funding is a necessity to achieve results.

The following table lists FY2017/2018 Ohio Report Card results and other metrics for Sandusky, Steubenville and the districts currently under ADC/mayoral control in comparison to State averages:

FY2017/2018	<u>Sandusky</u>	<u>Steubenville</u>	<u>Cleveland</u>	<u>Youngstown</u>	<u>Lorain</u>	<u>East Cleveland</u>	<u>State Average</u>
Attendance Rate	93.2%	95.4%	91.0%	89.9%	87.2%	88.0%	
Economically Disadvantaged	98.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	99.9%	97.4%	
Spending Per Pupil	\$9,721	\$7,259	\$11,707	\$12,804	\$9,489	\$12,725	\$9,353
Classroom Instruction	\$6,873	\$4,332	\$7,503	\$7,488	\$6,206 (A)	\$7,386	\$6,326
Non-classroom	\$2,847	\$2,927	\$4,177	\$5,316	\$3,283 (A)	\$5,339	\$3,027
Overall	C	B	F	F	F	F	
Achievement	D	B	F	F	F	F	
Progress	B	A	F	D	F	F	
Gap Closing	B	A	D	F	F	F	
Graduation Rate	D	A	F	F	F	F	
Improving At-Risk K-3 Readers	D	A	D	D	D	D	
Prepared for Success	F	F	F	F	F	F	

(A) Based on FY2018/2019, it is expected that Lorain spending figures would be more heavily weighted to non-classroom spending due to hiring of fifty plus administrators.

Please note the difference in Report Card results for Sandusky and Steubenville in comparison to those schools under ADC/mayoral control. Although Sandusky and Steubenville are not necessarily comparable in size to all the listed school districts, the process for improvement

would be similar. It would be instructive to determine how Sandusky and Steubenville are obtaining results while keeping spending within the State averages. There are most likely other districts with similar demographics that are showing results that could be reviewed and replicated. What level of community/business support and investment do Sandusky and Steubenville have? Might these practices be replicated, yet tailored, to the specific conditions in other districts? Would the Strive Partnership in Cincinnati be a possibility as a model that might be replicated? The Office for Improvement and Innovation is in place to assist schools in increasing student outcomes and in increasing engagement with families and community. The Support Teams also provides additional information and support for some of the most vulnerable student populations. Are these resources being used effectively to support schools in high poverty areas? Financial analysis and fiscal oversight of any spending might be supported through the Office of Finance to ensure fiscal accountability. Perhaps a true partnership between the schools and the ODE would improve results for all schools.

It stands to reason, that struggling schools would require more direct classroom supports and focus on wrap-around services rather than additional spending on administration. One wonders where the financial oversight and accountability by the appointed ADCs has been and why there appears to be little ODE direction as schools continue to post F-grades year after year. There is a fiduciary duty to spend taxpayer funds in a responsible way that leads to positive results. Is that occurring under the ADC model? Could existing funds be better allocated to direct classroom and wrap-around supports?

The Legislature has been contemplating how to address the achievement gap since at least 2014, as noted, below.

In a September 22, 2014 article by Jim Siegel in The Columbus Dispatch, it was reported that the State Report Card Data showed a significant performance gap between low-income and wealthier districts. Chairwoman of the Senate Education Committee at the time, Senator Peggy Lehner, R-Kettering was quoted: “If we are going to address poverty in the State of Ohio, the first thing we need to do is figure out how to start educating these kids. There is just no way around it that we’re going to need to invest money in different ways than what we’ve been doing, because what we’ve been doing isn’t working.” In an article in the same paper by Catherine Candisky dated January 7, 2016, entitled Ohio Schools Slide in National Rankings, it was reported that six years after ranking fifth in the nation, Ohio’s education system tumbled to 23rd. Ohio had among the largest gaps on national test scores between students living in poverty and their higher-income classmates; ranking 43rd in the nation. “This should be a real wake-up call for us to refocus our priorities. We need to give these kids a chance and education is key to having a chance in life. Until we figure out how to educate kids in poverty, it will continue to get worse,” Lehner said. “This has got to be a State priority. We took our eye off the ball of education during the recession.”

On April 24, 2019, Senator Lehner announced the formation of the Ohio Legislative Children's Caucus to prioritize solutions to support Ohio's children. "Ohio's children are Ohio's future. The wellbeing of our kids today is a clear indicator of our state's success tomorrow," said Lehner. "With 1 in 5 Ohio children currently living in poverty, we need to re-evaluate what we are currently doing and make bold, educated investments in their future and success."

Perhaps it's time to put in place supports with proven results. In addition to the information, above, please accept the following:

In the fifty years since President Johnson declared the War on Poverty, over \$22 trillion have been spent with no discernable change in the poverty rate; standing at approximately fifteen percent over that time period. (Information per the Heritage Foundation). Of course, there have been fluctuations in the poverty rate during that time dependent upon recession and recovery; with the most recent national statistic standing at 12.3 percent for 2017.

One such program that has had great success in eliminating poverty is Cincinnati Works. The Cincinnati Works model provides mentoring services to individuals in poverty as they work toward economic self-sufficiency through employment. This is a model that might be used to support students prior to graduation along with their parents/guardians and the community at large. This nationally-recognized model has been replicated in twenty-three cities nationwide and counts Dayton, Akron, Oxford, Mt. Vernon, Columbus Cincinnati, Bucyrus, Medina and Piqua as part of The Network in Ohio. As the model supports individuals on the path to economic self-sufficiency, it effectively ends the cycle of generational poverty; lifting adults along with their children to better futures. The co-founder of Cincinnati Works, Dave Phillips, and Cynthia Lamb, the President of National Replication would be good direct contacts on the success of this model in eliminating poverty. Further, they would have insight on how to leverage the success of Cincinnati Works to educating students in high poverty areas.

Cincinnati Works has systematically identified the barriers that hold individuals back as they work to move out of poverty; much like a business owner addresses issues affecting profitability – or the business owner would no longer be operating. Some of the barriers that children in poverty experience that might be addressed to support the overarching goal of educating each child include:

1. Mental health services - provided through insurance reimbursement, Medicaid reimbursement (signing up those that are eligible) or County Mental Health Board funds.
2. Support for Adverse Childhood Experiences – training regarding and processes to approach might be provided to teachers and administrators through partnerships with medical professionals/hospitals regarding trauma, brain development and neurological issues.
3. Bed and bedding for students routinely sleeping on the floor – provided through the not-for-profit -Sleep in Heavenly Peace.
4. Food issues – provided through support of local food banks or increased funding to cafeteria programs so that students have adequate nutrition.

5. Nutrition and cooking classes – provided by OSU Extension Offices at no cost in high poverty areas. Focus away from high sugar and high additive choices that can negatively affect learning.
6. Community gardens – with support from OSU Extension Offices and/or the Green Bronx Machine program with both in-school programs that have proven results in increasing attendance rates and test scores. Also includes summer programming.
7. Electronic devices in the classroom – a State-wide policy similar to the one recently adopted by Bexley City Schools might be considered. The NIH is set to release a report noting that children who spend more than two hours on screen time, daily, earn lower scores on thinking and language tests.
8. Employment program – possible replication of the Cincinnati Works model. Utilize business partners for student internships. Coaching of students prior to graduation; parents//guardians. Partner with existing vocational/trade programs, paid apprenticeships.

Many of these supports might be offered by the community at little to marginal cost.

In closing, I would like to reference Maslow's hierarchy of needs:

- If children do not have stable shelter, restful sleep and adequate nutrition, it is hard for them to focus.
- If children do not feel safe and secure, it is harder for them to break out of a fight//flight/freeze response to learn effectively. At the very least, the school might provide a safe haven for children.
- If students are not provided with a clear path to achievement, it is unlikely they will attend school.
- If children do not feel a sense of love and belonging, it is harder for them to achieve their full potential.

Addressing the barriers children in high poverty districts experience will begin to improve student achievement. The administrators and teachers in these districts know what steps need to be taken to support their students. A partnership with the local community will give schools the support they need so that the focus can be on education.

Administrators and teachers are dedicated to educating Ohio's children. Each child has the potential to do great things. A true partnership between the ODE and schools can provide the support teachers and students need and deserve.

Thank you for the opportunity,

K. L. Kennedy

References for ACEs:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/index.html>
- The Deepest Well – Healing the Long-Term Effects of Childhood Adversity – by Nadine Burke Harris, MD

References for poverty:

- Why Don't They Just Get a Job? - by Liane Phillips and Echo Montgomery
Garrett
- The Hillbilly Elegy – by J.D. Vance
- Bridges Out of Poverty - by Ruby K. Payne