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Committees

Agriculture & Natural Resources, Vice Chair  
General Government & Agency Review  
Local Government, Public Safety and Veterans Affairs  
Ways & Means

**Tim Schaffer**  
**State Senator, 20<sup>th</sup> Senate District**

**Senate General Government & Agency Review Committee**  
**Senate Bill 248—Sponsor Testimony**  
**Wednesday January 22, 2020**

Chairman Schuring, Vice Chair Rulli, Ranking Member O'Brien, and members of the Senate General Government & Agency Review Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 248.

Senate Bill 248 will further extend a moratorium on school storm shelters from September 15, 2020 to November 30, 2022.

The State of Ohio currently requires school facilities construction projects to include storm shelters for public school construction projects receiving state assistance. This is the case for all school construction projects, ranging from whole new buildings to smaller scale extensions. Storm shelter specifications call for modified walls, foundations, and other specific accommodations which drive up the cost. This is a redundant mandate that drives up the cost of building a school by as much as 5%.

With the current mandate, the construction of Pickerington Schools' two high school wings and a new junior high school would have created an additional cost of almost three million dollars for the construction of the mandatory three storm shelters. This is an issue that many Ohio public schools face that want to update, expand, or build new school buildings.

Due to safety procedures and other building standards, schools are already built with student safety as a top priority. According to the Ohio Facilities Construction Commission (OFCC), schools are required to have areas of refuge for these same types of storms, and these areas protect our children and students today. Therefore, it is not worth it to drive up the cost of a school building for negligible safety enhancements.

During the budget process, we included an amendment to extend the moratorium on the shelters. However, during conference committee, this moratorium was lessened from 2021 to 2020.

The redundant safety measures that a storm shelter provides for schools do not significantly increase student and faculty or employee safety. According to the OFCC study that was required in the budget, there has only been one fatality from a school being hit by a tornado since 1887.

Extending this moratorium will save school districts millions of dollars, while the storms shelters do not accomplish the implied goal of protecting all students. This is further shown in that Pickerington would have had to build school storm shelters for their two new high school extensions, in order to accommodate only the students that would be in that wing of the complex. The shelters would not even be for a majority of the students in either high school!

Thank you once again, Chairman Schuring, and the members of the committee, for the opportunity to present this issue to you today. I will be pleased to answer any questions that the committee may have.