



**The Alliance for High Quality Education  
Interested Party Testimony –H.B. No. 110  
House Finance Committee  
March 10, 2021**

Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Crawley, and Members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today regarding HB 110. My name is Anthony Podojil, Ph.D., and I am the Executive Director of The Alliance for High Quality Education (AHQE).

The Alliance for High Quality Education is a consortium of 74 high-performing school districts located throughout the State of Ohio including the Toledo, Cleveland, Akron-Canton, Columbus, Dayton, and Cincinnati areas. The Alliance for the last twenty-nine years has represented its members' interests on matters of state education policy and funding, as well as contributing to fostering high quality educational opportunities for students in their districts and those across the state.

Prior to joining the Alliance as its Executive Director, I worked as an elementary teacher and Middle School and High School building administrator in the Orange, Chagrin Falls, Riverside and Cleveland Heights/University Heights school districts. I also served as superintendent for the West Geauga Local Schools for thirteen years. I earned my doctorate at Cleveland State University in Urban Educational Administration.

### **School Funding**

The Alliance thanks the sponsors of HB 1 and the school funding task force members for the continued work and bipartisan effort to recommend a new funding formula for Ohio's schools. This collaborative effort has culminated in the development of comprehensive school funding plan, with the exception indicated below, which we believe provides a rational, transparent approach for determining both the cost of educating students and how the funding of education is shared between the state and local taxpayers.

The Alliance believes that the current minimum funding level contained in HB 1, (5% of the state share index), is an arbitrary figure established in existing law that should not be continued without re-evaluation as part of HB 1 deliberations.

## Transportation

HB 110 proposes many changes related to pupil transportation that will ultimately have significant impact on a district's daily transportation operations.

1. Requirement that students with late enrollment in community or private schools be scheduled on a bus within 14 days.

Transportation routing systems are both complex and contain interrelated components that many times result in multiple changes when requests involve a route change. For example, if a new student does not live along an existing route, a route must be modified. Any time a route is modified, all students riding the bus on the modified route could be impacted in regard to bus stop and pick up time changes. These issues would be magnified depending on the time of the school year any route modification is implemented. We recommend that in lieu of the 14-day placement requirement, the language be amended to require that the private school or community school student, upon enrollment, be assigned transportation as soon as reasonably practicable.

2. Restricting the use of public transit.

This proposed restriction will remove a transportation resource that has been available to public schools since pupil transportation was first mandated. In a perfect world, all students would ride a yellow school bus. Unfortunately, there simply are not enough yellow school buses and qualified bus drivers to accommodate many districts' pupil transportation needs. Public transit should remain an available option.

3. Require the impractical to transport parent notification be copied to the State Board of Education.

This notification is already required to be provided to ODE when a parent files an objection to the resolution. Requiring the letter to be copied to the State Board when issued simply creates an additional, unnecessary step in the process. Further, the State Board is ultimately charged with making final determinations regarding payment-in-lieu of transportation disputes. This is a quasi-judicial role the State Board plays in accordance with state statute. Requiring all parent notifications be served on the State Board in advance of final dispute resolution could interfere with due process requirements.

4. Changes the deadline for community schools to notify districts that they intend to transport their students to August 1.

August 1 is too late. Districts work during the Spring each year to determine transportation, staffing, and bus inventory needs and to make bus routing decisions for the

following school year. The current deadline is January 1. If a date change needs to occur, a more reasonable selection would be March 1 to coincide with each district's pupil transportation preparations for the next school year.

5. Transportation Funding.

The Alliance supports the transportation funding and related provisions contained in HB 1 and encourages this Committee to make pupil transportation policy decisions in line with HB 1.

**Computer Science Education**

We echo the testimony shared by OSBA, OASBO and BASA last week before the Finance Primary & Secondary Education Subcommittee and ask that the proposed computer science initiatives be removed from budget bill and instead be introduced as standalone legislation to ensure comprehensive vetting. And specific to the proposed creation of a statewide plan for computer science education, we believe that ultimately this statewide plan should inform any specific curricula requirements for students and schools.

**Graduation Requirements**

The bill proposes several changes to Ohio's graduation requirement system including a requirement that students complete the FAFSA as a prerequisite for graduation. We do not support this provision despite the bill's parent opt-out language. We do not dispute there is merit in encouraging students and parents to complete the FAFSA to see what types of aid would be available to them to make post-secondary education a reality. We simply disagree with tying this into graduation requirements and/or the state's school accountability system. Students and schools should not be penalized or held to a certain standard based on a something a parent or guardian ultimately has to complete. Instead, we recommend that additional resources be provided to districts and schools to support parent outreach and to connect districts with stakeholders in their communities who can help parents navigate the FAFSA process.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. The Alliance looks forward to working with the General Assembly and the DeWine administration as HB 110 and HB 1 continue to move through the legislative process. I am happy to address any questions Committee Members have at this time.