

*April 8, 2021*

Chair Oelslager, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Crawley, and Honorable Members of the Ohio House Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 110.

My name is Leila Kubesch, I am a full-time public school teacher at Norwood City School District. I am also the founder of Parents2Partners, a no-for-profit organization that aims to empower diverse families by showing them ways to engage in the learning of their children. I am an advocate on behalf of youth. I am also the 2020 Ohio Teacher of the Year and the 2020 National Toyota Family Teacher of the Year.

For over a decade, I have visited the homes of my students as a way to meet their families, welcome them to our school, and let them know that I serve as a resource. During this pandemic, these home visits turned into porch visits as I find new ways to connect with diverse families to learn about their needs and aspirations, and work to give them a voice for the success of their children. Today I am here to share our concerns about the FAFSA completion requirement for high school graduation within HB 110.

My district serves a high need community. Having visited many of the homes in my district and that of others in neighboring communities in my capacity as an interpreter, a volunteer, and humanitarian, I learned that many families struggle meeting basic needs. This includes lacking electricity, access to Wi-Fi, and in many face housing insecurities and homelessness. Many families who work full time and have access to transportation are unable to afford housing.

I urge—actually I plead—to representatives on this Committee to remove the FAFSA sharing requirements.

I urge legislators instead to address housing issues that face our students and their families. According to an online source: “The state of Ohio does not set a limit on how much a landlord can charge a tenant as a security deposit. The landlord could charge nothing or could charge one million dollars if they wanted. Most landlords will charge between one and two months’ rent.”

**Source:** <https://www.thebalancesmb.com/ohio-security-deposit-law-2125085>

I ask that the FAFSA language requiring students to complete and share these applications in order to obtain their hard-earned high school diploma be removed from HB 110, in turn releasing them from additional barriers to moving forward. Instead, an incentive in form of mini grants could be allocated to educate families on the benefits of applying for the FAFSA, offering assistance in completing the application, and marketing the opportunities.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 110. I would be happy to answer any questions at this time.