



February 15, 2021

Chair Manning, Vice Chair Bird, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony as a proponent of House Bill (HB) 67. I am Bob Hill, Superintendent of the Springfield City School District (SCSD).

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The Springfield City School District serves approximately 7,500 students preschool through grade 12 in a vibrant learning community of 59,500 residents in west-central Ohio. The dedicated and professional staff includes over 600 certificated staff members, approximately 400 support personnel, and approximately 600 substitute employees. We serve our students in 17 state of the art buildings. Of those full-time personnel, 80 percent chose to receive the COVID-19 vaccine last week, which is a testament of their dedication to the wellbeing of our students and their colleagues in this district.

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Our students represent our whole community and we value the racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic diversity of our student body. The Springfield Community is one that has experienced hard times and our poverty rate is twice the state and national average. We are part of the Federal Community Eligibility Provision and each of our students is eligible to receive no cost breakfast and lunch each day.

There is an unmatched sense of pride in our community and in the SCSD. Children are raised by parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, foster parents, churches, neighbors, coaches, their community, and their school. They are raised by former Wildcats that longed to have the opportunity to do what our students are given the opportunity to do in our ever-evolving society. From enrolling in college, enlisting in the military, or finding employment, the SCSD provides the necessary tools for our students to succeed. Our graduates last year are now attending Harvard, playing football in the Big Ten and SCC, finishing basic training and are stationed around the country, or starting new careers the Monday after graduation.

However, the global pandemic has created many challenges for our students and community. The Springfield City Schools have been open for in-person learning since August 26, 2020. All students in grades K-12 are provided with a laptop computer or Apple iPad, as well as a personal hotspot for those that lack internet connectivity, which based on our studies is approximately 40%. Because the District is fortunate enough to be able to supply the aforementioned technology, families were given the option to choose in person or virtual learning models for the 2020-2021 school year. Approximately 30% of our families chose the remote option, with the remaining 70% attempting to attend school in person each day.

My staff is dedicated, but they are tired. We work day and night to meet the needs of our students. Our COVID-19 team has been aggressive in their approach to quarantining our staff

and students, which has enabled us to stay in school. Our virtual students receive much-needed food/nutrition every Thursday for the following week. Our team has worked with our community partners to supply food to our after-school programs. There are coat drives, hygiene drives, and shoe drives. We have opened three tutoring centers for our virtual and in-school students available daily to aid students academically struggling at this time. The SCSD is supplying these basic needs and at the same time are helping seniors apply to college, identify scholarships, and making sure that they have enough credits to graduate. All of this while attempting to find a way to hold another graduation that resembles something traditional, but is socially distanced, masked, and safe for all.

All of the additional aforementioned services are being taken care of without additional staff, sometimes happening while teachers are at home teaching remotely, with COVID symptoms, because they will not give up on their students, this year or through this battle against a global pandemic. We remain committed. We remain concerned for the wellbeing of our students and the ever-increasing national teen suicide statistics. We lie awake at night concerned about:

- Who is hungry?
- Who has heat?
- Who lost a family member to this dreaded virus?
- Who is lacking in reading skills?
- Who needs additional help with math?
- How can we schedule National Honor Society inductions?
- How many parents can attend an athletic event safely?
- How do we help our students update resumes and find employment in these times?

And now, we worry about state testing at a time when we are also worried about keeping people alive and safe. Schools already utilize internal measures that are timely and provide actionable data to drive and adjust instruction to meet student learning goals. State prescribed tests are redundant and provide unnecessary stress on students and teachers in the middle of global pandemic.

Along with the hardships, we have as many success stories. We want to send our students off to Harvard again in the fall, and watch others on television playing in the Army vs. Navy football game. Our students have the drive and determination to get the job done. We are winning national awards for engineering competitions at the middle school level and our high school mock trial team is nationally renowned. The added stress of state testing at this time, and the amount of time it takes away from actual learning is not what is best for the students of the Springfield City School District.

I personally applaud Representative Koehler and Representative Bird for their efforts to meet the needs of our students and teachers. As the legislation progresses, I believe that two very important elements to include in this bill are graduation flexibility for the 2020-2021 school year as was contained in HB 197 for the 2019-2020 school year, and an extension of remote learning flexibility (as contained in HB 164 for this school year) into the 2021-2022 school year.

On behalf of the 7,500 students in the SCSD, and their very bright futures, please give your most serious consideration to passage of HB 67, with added supportive language for graduation and extended virtual learning platform availability.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony for HB 67.

Robert F. Hill, Ed.D.
Superintendent/CEO
Springfield City School District