



Toledo Public Schools
Board of Education
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Proponent Testimony for House Bill 34, Stephanie Eichenberg, Toledo Public Schools

Chairwoman Manning, Vice Chair Bird and Ranking Member Robinson and members of the Primary and Secondary Education Committee thank you for considering my testimony today.

Recently our Toledo Public Schools Board passed a resolution in support of House Bill 34. The issue of records transmittal timing may seem small, but on an individual student level the impacts of delayed records transmittal can create a tidal wave on consequences in addition to wasting taxpayer dollars. Delays in transmitting transcripts cause problems for transferring students' placements, and ultimately those delays can cause a student to not graduate. While some delays are simply due to sloppiness and lack of accountability, other delays are a version of pass the buck, where one school waits for another school to be their collections agency for overdue fines and fees.

It may not seem significant if it takes 10-15 days rather than 5 days to receive records, but when we place a Special Education student in the wrong classroom for any length of time in a new environment, we risk issues that could impact the safety of the student in question and the safety of the students and staff around that student. Special Education students may be placed in the wrong classroom for the length of time it may take a new school to understand their unique needs, disrupting service provision and duplicating planning work done in the previous district. If the process drags on for weeks, a month or more, the new school is using their state foundation aid to do the same work for which another district has already spent plenty of state and local resources. Additionally, we will always experience different levels of parent engagement and understanding, and for high mobility students or students changing guardians, parental knowledge may simply be lacking to assist a school in placing a student correctly. Transcripts are an important piece of this puzzle and delays in transmission from the old school to the new school can create significant learning barriers. Unfortunately, a student leaving may not seem like a priority to the old school, so having a timeline within the law would assist with all parties to understand the acceptable timeline.

Frequently, we find that small fines are the reason a school or district is choosing to hold a transcript. This might seem like a convincing way to collect fees from students, but it transfers a time-wasting burden to the receiving school or district. Especially if a student is changing guardianship and schools at the same time, what are the chances the student's new guardian will be able to navigate paying the \$26 in supply fees that were never paid for student at a prior school they've never even seen? How to collect the funds is the sending school's issue, it should not be the receiving school's burden. If a textbook is lost when a family loses their housing, fees can be more significant. For a family that's already in jeopardy financially, it's unrealistic to think they can pay replacement costs. It's not unusual when the fee is small but still large enough to be an issue for an especially poor family, that our Principals are taking cash out of their

pockets and paying a student's bill personally. They do this so they can secure a transcript, care for placement and recognize the student's credits officially.

This issue of collections is magnified when students transfer from a voucher school where they've not paid the balance of their tuition. These students come to us without a transcript, and while their prior school accepted the state and district's funds through the voucher program, their family was unable to meet the remaining tuition balance. We have a local high school that does this to students each and every year, which makes me question how well they vet incoming students' ability to pay their portion.

For them it's not a problem, they simply hold the transcript hostage and expect the families to come up with the funds. They will carry a student 2-3 years behind on their tuition balance, then cut them off when it's nearly impossible for the student to recover their credits for an on-time graduation. We are not allowed to credit classes without an official transcript so our district and your state dollars are invested into credit recovery programs for these students, and our TPS Foundation partners and even our Superintendent hit the fundraising streets to see if any donor will assist a student with their bill. This is a ridiculous transfer of accountability. When a school does this consistently, they have received their voucher dollars for the year or years the student was there, so it's not an entire loss for them. And since the school I referred to has 86% of their student body on vouchers, it seems like a cynical calculation that most families will pay, so why bother with extensive financial screening of voucher students? For some of these families if the school had simply asked for a statement of budget and evaluated it, it would be obvious the family could not afford the balance. But instead, they hold some students' transcripts each year counting on most families being desperate enough to do anything to see their student graduate, and that they as the voucher school will benefit from my district raising funds for the students in this situation.

We have seen students in this last situation give up and drop out. Also appalling, any late or lack of graduation is counted against us, the receiving district, simply because we can't recognize the credits the student has earned previously at their voucher school. How is this possible? Because we have regulation that says we cannot acknowledge an unofficial transcript for credit, but none that says when a school must send over a transcript.

Let's be student centered and ask schools to finish their work with a student when a student transfers. Please vote yes for House Bill 34.