



February 9, 2021

Representative Manning,

Thank you for your leadership of the House's Primary and Secondary Education Committee. Your experience as an educator gives you incredible insight into the needs of Ohio's students and the schools who serve them. I look forward to seeing how that experience and insight pays off for the students in our state over this legislative session.

I write to you today in strong opposition of House Bill 34. I believe that this bill was written with the best of intentions, but would actually have a deleterious effect on students, families, and schools throughout Ohio. It is easy to say "Schools should send transcripts right away when a student transfers", but I think that a deeper examination of the issue shows just how complex this truly is.

I represent two private high schools in the Cleveland area. Tuition revenue accounts for more than 85% of our total budget. Parents agree to pay tuition and part of that tuition agreement is an acknowledgement that we will not send transcripts to another school until the tuition is paid in full. Without that agreement, it is hard to see how the school would operate. Additionally, that agreement gives us flexibility and incentive to work with families who are struggling to pay their tuition. Let me give you an example that happened many times over the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Beginning in March, hundreds of our families lost wages or jobs due to COVID-19 effects. That caused many of them to fall behind in their monthly tuition payments. In each instance, we worked with families to rearrange payment dates and reschedule tuition payments so that their sons and daughters could continue to experience the excellent education that we offer. We are able to do that because we know that families will pay in the long run to get their transcripts. In the end, every single family who struggled with tuition payments was able to continue their education in our schools. It was a great resolution that we were able to achieve, but it was because we had the knowledge that families would hold up their end of the tuition agreement.

If we did not have that knowledge, our schools (like most other private schools in the state)

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would have to operate completely differently. As soon as parents miss a payment, we would probably have to ask them to transfer. We would have to do that because repeated missed payments would no longer have to be a concern for families. If we could not hold their transcript, the system would be ripe for parents to abuse it by not paying tuition. It costs us money to educate their students, so we would have to act in a fashion that would minimize potential losses. That would mean forcing students to transfer and uproot their education, even mid-year. That is incredibly anti-family and anti-student. The current system gives us every reason to work with families to make arrangements when they struggle, but HB 34 would push us in the opposite direction.

HB 34 is certainly well-intentioned, but the effects would hurt families and would make private schools weaker. There would be more students changing schools mid-year - something which decades of research show is harmful to educational outcomes. HB 34 is a bill that seeks to fix a problem but would create a much larger one. I urge you to oppose this bill as you consider the future of education in Ohio.

Chris Steinmann - Superintendent & CEO, Cleveland Lutheran High School Association

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