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Rep. Boggs: Thank you Chair Manning, Vice Chair Bird, Ranking Member Robinson and members of the Primary and Secondary Education committee for the opportunity to testify today on HB 147, regarding investigating school's compliance with bullying policies.

This legislation was drafted after a constituent reached out to my office for assistance because her daughter was being bullied at school. Although the school district had a comprehensive anti-bullying policy, as required under Ohio law, my constituent did not believe the school was following its own policy. We quickly realized that while Ohio Law requires schools to have an anti-bullying policy, it does not provide any accountability mechanism to ensure that the school is living up to the standards set by its own policy.

HB 147 addresses this deficiency. It allows parents or students to request the Ohio Department of Education to determine whether their school is conforming to its own anti-bullying policies as required by Ohio law.

Rep. Lightbody: This bill creates accountability for schools by providing the Department of Education with the authority to create a process for evaluating whether a school is properly complying with its own anti-bullying policies. If a student (or parent of a student) makes a report that the school is violating its own anti-bullying policy, the Department must conduct an investigation according to procedures developed by the Department. As a part of the investigation, the Department must provide the student and the school an opportunity for a hearing. If it determines that the school has not complied with the policy, the Department must order the school to comply.

In 2019, the National Center for Educational Statistics reported that 1 out of every 5 students is a victim of bullying. HB 147 closes the gaps in the Ohio Revised Code and provides more reassurance for parents that their children will actually be protected by the anti-bullying policies that are in place in their schools.

We would like to thank the committee for their time and we welcome any questions.