



**Government Oversight Committee
House Bill 257
Proponent Testimony**

**Buckeye Association of School Administrators
Ohio Association of School Business Officials
Ohio School Boards Association**

October 24, 2023

Chair Peterson, Vice Chair Thomas, Ranking Member Humphrey, and members of the House Government Oversight Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of House Bill (HB) 257. Our three organizations represent public school district boards of education, superintendents, treasurers/CFOs, business managers, and other school business officials from around the state.

HB 257 would allow members of certain public bodies to hold and attend meetings virtually when certain conditions are met. While the bill does not apply to boards of education, it does apply to certain board-established committees. On behalf of our members, we support these changes to offer flexibility to hold board-established committee meetings virtually.

Board-established committees must follow the Ohio Sunshine Law (which includes the Ohio Public Records Act R.C. 149.43 and the Ohio Open Meetings Act R.C. 121.22). Board-established committees are typically formed to provide opportunities for community members to inform school districts' decisions on certain topics, such as school district finance committees and curriculum committees. While the number of community members serving on a board-established committee varies, the community members typically represent the majority of the committee (e.g., three community members and two school board members).

Considering the demands placed on community members serving on board-established committees can be demanding, it can be difficult to recruit members willing to serve. The time commitment required to serve on a board-established committee includes time to prepare for the committee meeting, time participating in the meetings, and the time commuting to and from the committee. Having a virtual option for these committees would provide flexibility for community members serving and would greatly assist with recruitment and retention.

HB 257 permits meetings to be held virtually when the public body has adopted certain policies, including methods by which members of the public may observe and attend meetings. We appreciate this requirement and believe it will allow greater participation by the public when they can observe and attend virtually.

Finally, we believe that the safeguards in the bill – such as prohibiting public bodies from conducting a meeting virtually if the meeting involves a vote to approve a major nonroutine expenditure or significant hiring decision, or a vote to support a tax issue or tax increase – make sense and would not apply to board-established committees since these actions must be taken by a board of education, to which this legislation does not apply.

Because local school districts represent the communities they serve, board-established committees play a critical role in gathering community feedback and encouraging engagement in our schools. The community members serving on these committees are volunteers and often include the business and other local leaders in a community. We believe the option to hold board-established committees virtually will assist in the recruitment and retention of these valued and essential volunteers.

Again, thank you for considering our testimony. Feel free to contact us with questions.

Respectfully submitted,

Katie Johnson
Deputy Executive Director, Ohio Association of School Business Officials
614-431-9116
katie@oasbo-ohio.org

Paul Imhoff
Director of Governmental Relations, Buckeye Association of School Administrators
614-846-4080
imhoff@basa-ohio.org

Jennifer Hogue
Director of Legislative Services, Ohio School Boards Association
614-540-4000
jhogue@@ohioschoolboards.org