



Beaver Local School District

46090 Bell School Rd.—East Liverpool, Ohio 43920

Administration Office

46088 Bell School Rd.—East Liverpool, Ohio 43920

October 8, 2023

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this in regards to House Bill 206. I believe it is a bill that has merit in our current world of education. My name is Eric N. Lowe. I have served as the Beaver Local School District Superintendent in Columbiana County, the past 8 years. Prior to that I had served as an elementary teacher in the district for 10 years and as a building administrator for 6 years in the Beaver Local School District.

I am very blessed to have served in the same district for the past 24 years. Our district is rural in nature and many of our challenges are much different than suburban or urban districts. However, since COVID, we have seen a dramatic increase in student behaviors here in the district. Many of these behaviors involve actions which demonstrate increased risky behaviors. These involve THC vapes, social media misuse, and other items which jeopardize the health and safety of district staff and students.

I believe the bill that is sponsored by Representative Blasdel and Click allows much needed flexibility for districts when navigating these issues. We currently can put terms in for abeyance in student discipline situations which make families address mental health, abuse issues, and a variety of other circumstances. The challenge is there is no allowance to extend student items beyond 80 days except in the case of weapons. We do see families that refuse to participate in mental health interventions and this would allow us to force them to if they want to return to school. Currently after the 80 days, they can return to school regardless of what terms they followed through on during their absence from school. This would allow us to mandate in those instances that we see items which we believe pose a danger to health and safety to insist to families that without these being properly worked through with professionals that a student could be required to remain out of school.

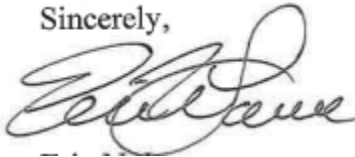
One piece that I would like to see added to the bill is in the following area. A major challenge that we have had since COVID is increased detrimental behaviors among students in K-3. These behaviors have negative impacts on the education of other students due to the disruptions created along with putting staff in situations which jeopardize the health and safety of them to manage these when they are presented. The current law in the SAFE School Act is very limiting on K-3 discipline. The offenses which are outlined that pose a significant danger are defined and in many of our experiences those are not what we navigate but at the same time these behaviors are no less impactful to our school community. Families become very frustrated with the district when we cite law about why certain actions continue to occur. We work to offer interventions, and ensure

students have all the support services they need but sometimes we need to be able to remove them from the school setting. I believe some flexibility in this area would be an asset to districts. I am confident that if you discuss with other districts they also have seen large increases in challenging behaviors with younger students since the pandemic. The law ties our hands in navigating some of these in a manner that may be best for all students. It is always a last resort with younger students but there are times that you would benefit from having this option.

I believe that districts more than ever work to keep students in schools. We know the importance of students being present along with providing interventions that give them the best opportunity to reach their full potential. However, there are rare cases where issues involving mental health, along with extenuating circumstances mean that districts need to be provided the flexibility to be able to consider what is best for district students/staff overall when navigating the handling of these matters.

Thank You for taking time to read this, and for all your continued efforts to support educators to meet the ever changing landscape of the world of education.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric N. Lowe". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Eric" being the most prominent.

Eric N. Lowe

Beaver Local School District Superintendent

eric.lowe@beaverlocal.org

Cell Phone (330)383-3835

46088 Bell School Road

East Liverpool, OH 43920