



ADMINISTRATION BLDG.  
244 S. MONROE ST.  
TIFFIN, OH 44883  
419.447.2515 PHONE  
419.448.5202 FAX  
WWW.TIFFINCITYSCHOOLS.ORG

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October 5, 2023

Representative Gary Click  
77 South High Street  
Floor 77  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Representative Click:

House Primary & Secondary Ed Committee  
HB 206 Proponent Testimony  
Superintendent Ben Richards, Tiffin City Schools

Chairman Bird, Vice-Chair Fowler-Arthur, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 206.

I have served as the superintendent of Tiffin City Schools for the past year. Prior to that, I have administrative and teaching experience that has spanned two decades. It is safe to say that education has changed significantly in that time, and our threats have changed significantly as well. As our threats change, our responses to those threats need to change as well.

In case you do not know, there is currently no process or procedure to permanently exclude a student from a school district. Decorum prevents me from even sharing hypotheticals, but simply imagine the most horrific situation possible in a school caused by a student, and then imagine telling the victims/community that the student will be permitted to return at some point. Please note, as an educator, the notion of permanently excluding a student from physical attendance at a school building runs counter to our mandate to educate all students. However, due to the expansion of school choice, we DO have additional options now (online schools, etc.) that were not as prevalent 20 years ago. The concept of permanent exclusion should only be used in the most significant situations where the return of a student poses a substantial risk to the community and other students. While services and support should continue to be offered to the student, it is possible that the best placement for that student may not be within their home school district.

What does that process look like? Who is involved in that process? Those are the details that would surely need to be resolved in order to proceed. However, those are questions I am confident can be answered. The alternative is simply unacceptable.

I am truly blessed to not have any recent exposure to this issue. However, the reality is that any school is simply one traumatic experience away from being forced into this untenable scenario. It seems more prudent to be proactive at looking for a solution than reactive to a problem.

I thank you for your time and consideration of this matter.

Ben Richards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Benjamin A. Richards". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Superintendent, Tiffin City Schools  
ben\_richards@tiffincityschools.org