

**4<sup>th</sup> House District**

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Including Gahanna, New Albany,  
Westerville, Columbus, Jefferson,  
Plain, and other area Townships

**Committees**

Commerce & Labor  
Higher Education  
Pensions (Ranking Member)  
Primary & Secondary Education  
Technology & Innovation

**Representative Beryl Brown Piccolantonio  
4<sup>th</sup> House District**

Testimony to the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee  
House Bill 582  
December 3, 2024

Chair Manning, Vice Chair Fowler Arthur, and fellow members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for inviting Representative Robinson and me to provide sponsor testimony for House Bill 582, the School Busing Improvement Act.

As you have also heard from Rep. Robinson, HB 582 would address logistical concerns from school districts and make a number of upgrades to school transportation in Ohio, easing the trip to and from school for students and drivers.

Ohio is one of only six states that requires public school districts to provide transportation for students who attend charter and non-public schools according to the National Association for Pupil Transportation.

Local school districts are by definition somewhat geographically cohesive, and school districts are able to take neighborhood configuration into account when building schools and creating bus routes. Therefore, a fairly funded district is able to establish an efficient transportation policy. However, when that district is required to provide transportation to community and charter schools, it cannot rely on the same geographic cohesion. The average public school student has a shorter bus route compared to a non-public school student.<sup>i</sup> HB 582 addresses this concern by increasing the weight of transportation funding from 1.5 to 2.0 for a community school student and 2.0 to 3.0 for a chartered nonpublic school student.

Like many industries, the school transportation sector faces staffing shortages, leading to strain on bus drivers. In 2019, Ohio had 25,706 active bus drivers. As of August 2024, this number was down to 18,817 active bus drivers.<sup>ii</sup> This responsibility must be shouldered entirely by the school district. Further, school transportation presents unique staffing needs, with drivers needed mainly in two separate shifts before and after the school day. If a school district is required to transport students to chartered nonpublic schools with similar bell schedules, that can exacerbate the issue. Enabling school districts to establish windows of time for the other schools for which they are responsible for providing transportation, would alleviate some of this burden.

House Bill 582 would also adjust the procedure by which the Department of Education and Workforce (DEW) monitors and ensures compliance. Under the new procedure, if DEW determines a consistent or prolonged period of noncompliance, it will deduct the daily amount of that payment for the number of students who did not receive the required transportation and students who arrived late from the district's payment for

student transportation for each day the district is not in compliance. A district is exempt from paying a penalty fee if the Department determines that extenuating circumstances caused the failure to comply. The bill provides that these provisions do not affect the authority of a school district to provide payment in lieu of transportation.

Finally, HB 582 would appropriate \$50 million for FY 2025 for the school bus purchase grant program. A total of 1,465 buses have been accepted by 497 school districts under the program in the FY 2020 and 2022 grant rounds.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this important piece of legislation. We would be happy to answer any questions.

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<sup>i</sup> <https://spectrumnews1.com/oh/columbus/news/2024/08/30/education--nonpublic--schools>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://stnonline.com/special-reports/ohio-school-districts-face-mounting-compliance-staffing-challenges-amid-legal-battle/>