



Senator Michele Reynolds - 3rd District
Senate Education Committee
Senate Bill -Sponsor Testimony

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, and Ranking Member Ingram, thank you for the opportunity to present SB 79, which would update the law regarding Dropout Prevention and Recovery Schools and the students that these schools serve.

When a student drops out of school, they do not receive the knowledge and skills necessary to become successful, productive members in society, thereby devastating their future and placing a strain on state resources. The pandemic led to an increase in students dropping out of school, as chronic absenteeism surged and thousands of Ohio students simply failed to return to their school.

Now more than ever, Dropout Prevention and Recovery Schools are critical to the lives of students and Ohio's economy. The state board of education and the Ohio Department of Education need to work in partnership with Dropout Prevention and Recovery Schools, not against them, as they serve some of Ohio's most vulnerable students.

Dropout Prevention and Recovery Schools are community schools that primarily serve students between 16-22 years of age who dropped out of high school or are at risk of dropping out due to poor attendance, disciplinary actions, or suspension. When these students fail in the traditional system or when the traditional system fails them, Dropout Prevention and Recovery Schools are there to pick them up and place them onto a pathway to success. These schools operate differently than traditional schools because they must be exceptionally innovative and committed to their students' success inside and outside of the classroom.

Currently, the bureaucratic constraints are designed by a traditional education establishment that does not fully understand how dropout prevention and recovery schools operate. Collaboration with stakeholders is critical as the success of these schools and the success of the students they serve is too often determined by bureaucratic systems misaligned with the goals, values, and service required to address the many needs students bring through the door. SB XX takes an important step forward in ensuring that Dropout Prevention and Recovery Schools can effectively and proficiently meet the needs of their students

SB 79 proposes the following changes:

- 1) It promotes stakeholder engagement by requiring the state board of education to consult with the stakeholder groups prior to setting performance levels on the Dropout Prevention and Recovery report card;
- 2) Establishes the Dropout Prevention and Recovery Advisory Council to work with the Ohio State Board of Education and the Ohio Department of Education to improve cooperation and communication;
- 3) Establishes a fair rules process for Dropout Prevention and Recovery Schools; and
- 4) Allows students to take their end of course exams as they complete their coursework rather than waiting for standardized testing windows that could be much later in the semester

This bill is the product of many stakeholder meetings aimed at determining how Dropout Prevention and Recovery Schools can better assist the students they serve. This bill would give students more opportunities to graduate and would help fill the dire needs in the workforce. I respectfully ask for your support of Senate Bill 79. Thank you for the opportunity to testify, I would be happy to answer any questions the committee may have at this time.