

Proponent Testimony
Senate Bill 168
Mr. Paul Craft
Superintendent
Buckeye Valley Local Schools

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer a few thoughts today in support of components of Senate Bill 168.

My name is Paul Craft and I am a long-time educator in the state of Ohio with over thirty years of service as a teacher, building and district level administrator - including over ten years as a district Superintendent. I currently have the good fortune of serving as the Superintendent of the Buckeye Valley Local Schools.

I was gratified to see that there are several meaningful steps toward clarifying requirements and improving flexibility for local school districts in this Senate Bill. Local control and smaller government are ideals toward which our state should aspire and this bill includes several small but meaningful steps in that direction.

Provisions related to the ability to renew three-year exemptions for participation in teacher preparation/mentorship programs for high performing districts, the elimination of requirements for districts to enter into supplemental contracts for non-traditional teaching schedules, and the ability for local districts to develop their own frameworks for teacher evaluation are especially helpful. It is toward that last provision that I want to direct the bulk of my comments.

The Ohio Teacher Evaluation System frameworks 1.0 and 2.0 have driven our teacher evaluations across the state of Ohio for the last ten years. I feel that the work around those two frameworks really has driven improvement around the state when it comes to teacher evaluations. However, all such programs can become more and more bureaucratic and bogged down in teacher contract language and such. Providing flexibility to local districts to develop more streamlined and meaningful alternatives is a worthwhile goal and a provision on which I want to offer support.

One example is the current need to apply the framework related to the incorporation of student growth data into the work of teachers where this doesn't necessarily make sense – say in an art or music class. I could see us creating an expectation related to the teacher developing a student portfolio analysis, for example, as something that could drive meaningful growth in instructional practice in a way the current framework does not. Similarly, the Ohio Principal Evaluation System is based on a couple of observations similar in structure to OTES. That artificial construct in no way captures how I truly evaluate and mentor my principals.

Thank you for the first steps on a journey to reduce the bureaucratic requirements on local districts. Your efforts will help districts to become more nimble, more responsive to local needs, and more streamlined administratively. If you have any questions as you move forward with this work, please feel free to reach out if you feel I can help in any way.