



Western Ohio Advocacy Network
Letter in Opposition to S.B. 295

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Ingram and the rest of the Senate Education Committee.

The Western Ohio Advocacy Network (WOAN) is a group of over 40 school districts, career technical centers and educational service centers in northwest Ohio. We firmly believe that school policy in Ohio is best when it is left to local districts to make the determinations of what work for their families and communities.

We are submitting this testimony to express our concerns on SB 295. We understand the importance of a quality public education and we work daily to provide that to each of our students. Recent history shows rather than allowing our districts to have the flexibility to do what is best for their students, the state and federal governments smother the schools with rules, regulations and mandates.

SB 295 is more of that pattern. We already have academic distress commissions in state law and now we will have school closures as well. Districts spend significant resources complying with mandates and requirements. Resources better directed towards improving our students' education.

Lame duck is not the time to be introducing and attempting to pass this type of public policy change. Having just obtained the language last week interested parties need time to review the requirements and determine whether the bill as written can be operationalized.

There are questions that need to be answered regarding whether additional resources will be available for buildings facing closure, what provisions or responsibilities managing entities will assume from the districts and what steps can be taken to have a school removed from this oversight.

Our schools are one of the major foundations of our communities. This type of policy initiative, which potentially would close some of our schools needs to be carefully thought out and fully vetted. This cannot take place during an abbreviated lame duck session and so we respectfully ask that the committee hold off on any activity on this bill and that we continue to discuss this issue during the 136th General Assembly.