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**Testimony Before the Ohio House Education Committee
H. B. 127 – Regarding Child Privacy
May 6, 2025**

Dear Chairperson Fowler Arthur, Vice Chair Odioso, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today. Advocates for Basic Legal Equality, Inc. (ABLE) is a non-profit regional law firm that provides free legal assistance in civil matters in 32 counties in Western Ohio. We help individuals and groups living on low incomes pursue justice and equal access to opportunity, including through advocacy for systemic reforms.

House Bill 127 gives school districts the ability to better protect the privacy of children. As the law now stands, school districts can be compelled to release personal and private details about their students in response to almost any request, made by almost anybody¹, under the Public Records Act. These private details about children, called Directory Information, include the child's name, the address where they live, their telephone number, their date of birth, place of birth, the child's major field of study, details about the child's participation in officially recognized activities and sports—and if the child does belong to a sports team, their height and their weight, the child's dates of school attendance and graduation, and more.²

This gap in privacy law forces school districts to comply with records requests for this long list of details, almost without discretion. This can damage schools' relationship with students and their parents. Although parents can choose to "opt out" of Directory Information, parents we work with do not know how this interacts with Public Records Act and that it is not just about a class roster or school yearbook. Current law exposes the private information of children much more broadly and without regard for how that information may be used.

¹ Under R.C. Section 3319.321, schools must deny a request for directory information if it will be used specifically "for use in a profit-making plan or activity." However, the stated purpose for using this information about children may not always be clear or truthful, maintaining the potential for harmful results.

² The federal Family Education Records Privacy Act protects Personally Identifiable Information (PII) from children's education records, prohibiting schools from disclosing it to third parties without prior written consent from the student or their parent, unless specific exceptions apply. This list of Directory Information is one of the exceptions, thus allowing release of this broad list of child information without parent consent.

House Bill 127 closes this loophole and gives local school districts the ability to create policies that protect the children in their communities. Most importantly, it helps prevent the exploitative use of Directory Information by those who mean harm to Ohio families, including dangerous predators, cybercriminals, and identity thieves.

For these reasons, I ask you to consider my testimony and vote YES on this important bill. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify and I welcome any questions.

Sincerely,

Ryan Davis
Staff Attorney

