



Greater Cleveland
Regional Transit Authority

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**Testimony of the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority
Ohio Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
In Opposition of House Omnibus Amendment H.C. 2285-1
May 14, 2025, | 2:30 PM**

Good afternoon, Chair Schaffer, Vice Chair Koehler, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee. My name is Dr. Floun'say Caver, and I serve as the Deputy General Manager of Operations at the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (GCRTA) Ohio's largest public transit agency.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding the language included in House Omnibus Amendment H.C. 2285-1, which would significantly reduce student access to public transit in Ohio's most populous counties in a way that is simply unworkable.

GCRTA has a longstanding partnership with the Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD), providing safe, affordable, and efficient transportation for more than 13,500 high school students. This partnership allows students to travel not only to and from school, but also to afterschool programs, jobs, healthcare, and other critical services—using their transit ID cards with no blackout dates and no restrictions on hours of use.

The current model is both cost-effective and responsive to the needs of families and schools. CMSD pays GCRTA approximately \$2.5 million annually for this service. In contrast, providing yellow bus transportation to these students would involve an enormous year-long start-up cost to purchase new buses and to hire and train drivers—costs made even more significant due to the exceptional inflation in driver wages from 2019 to 2026. Ongoing operations would then require approximately \$40 million annually beginning in August 2026.

We understand and share the General Assembly's commitment to student safety. However, we are deeply concerned about the unintended consequences of the proposed amendment. H.C. 2285-1 would prohibit students from transferring at "central hubs"—many of which are specifically designed and staffed to provide a safe, supervised environment. Forcing students to transfer in unsupervised areas with no security infrastructure would reduce—not improve—student safety.

The amendment also implies a one-seat ride requirement, which is not feasible within the structure of a fixed-route public transit system. Moreover, federal regulations prohibit GCRTA from offering charter-like services. This language could place our federal funding at risk.

Between July 2024 and March 2025, GCRTA provided more than 1.5 million rides to CMSD high school students. This included more than 23,000 after-hours weekday rides and more than 83,000 weekend trips—underscoring the vital role transit plays in supporting youth outside the



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classroom. Restricting transfers at key connection points would severely limit access to jobs, enrichment programs, and essential services.

In addition to CMSD's formal partnership, GCRTA also provides reduced student fares at \$1.75 per trip to eligible students outside the district agreement. In 2024, this generated \$374,000 in fare revenue—equivalent to approximately 213,700 student trips taken by riders who are not CMSD students. These students rely on our system to reach suburban schools, charter schools, parochial schools, and other educational institutions across the county. Language that restricts hubs or imposes unworkable service standards would negatively impact these riders as well—many of whom do not have access to yellow bus alternatives.

We respectfully urge the General Assembly to remove the language in H.C. 2285-1. Students should be able to use public transit safely and efficiently. Public transit agencies across Ohio remain committed partners in ensuring student safety—working closely with schools, law enforcement, and our communities every day. In our case, that includes the GCRTA Transit Police Department, which ensures a safe environment for all riders, including students.

This proposed language would undermine those efforts, create new operational and financial burdens, and place our federal funding at risk.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration. We look forward to continuing to work with you to maintain and strengthen Ohio's commitment to safe, accessible, and affordable transportation for all students. I would be pleased to answer any questions.