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State Senator Catherine D. Ingram

9th Senate District
136th General Assembly

Sponsor Testimony – Senate Bill 49, Education Committee

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 47. This legislation aims to eliminate the current right of first refusal given to certain schools, like charter and private institutions, when Ohio school districts sell surplus property. The change is all about fairness and transparency.

Right now, some schools get first pick on buying surplus property, which means they have an advantage over other potential buyers. This legislation would level the playing field, ensuring that every buyer, whether a public or private institution, has equal access to these properties. By removing that special treatment, we're opening the process so that every buyer has a fair chance.

This also gives Ohio school districts more local control and flexibility. Right now, many districts are restricted by this rule, even when it's not in their best interest. Without the right of first refusal, districts will have the freedom to make the decisions that best serve their communities and resources. Ohio districts will have the ability to adapt and decide what works for them, without being tied to the preferences of a few institutions.

Additionally, selling surplus property to a broader range of buyers could bring in more revenue for districts. The money from these sales could then be reinvested directly into improving educational programs for students across Ohio.

It's important to note that, while some schools may be concerned about losing their right of first refusal, this change is ultimately about managing public resources responsibly. Ohio's school districts need the flexibility to adjust to changing needs, especially as the educational landscape evolves. By promoting a more open and competitive process, we can ensure that public assets are used in the best way possible for all communities across the state.

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you again for this opportunity. I would be happy to take any questions you may have.