



A Voice for Ohio's DOPR Schools

**Senate Education Committee
Senate Bill 19
Proponent Testimony
October 28, 2025**

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on the proposed amendment to Senate Bill 19. My name is Shawn Lenney, I am the Executive Director of the Greater Ohio Virtual School, but my comments below are on behalf of the GRADS Coalition.

The GRADS Coalition consists of eight dropout prevention and recovery (DOPR) community schools operating throughout the state, both online and brick-and-mortar. DOPR schools educate some of Ohio's most vulnerable students who have struggled in traditional school settings. Our member schools are free, public schools that provide unique learning environments and services to help our students get back on track, and most importantly, earn a high school diploma. We have proven track records which provide choice to Ohio families, nontraditional approaches to education, and our schools consistently earn ratings of Meets and Exceeds Standards on the Dropout Prevention School report card. Our communities recognize the value of our schools and are supportive in our mission.

We are seeking an exemption from the bill's academic intervention services provisions. As you may be aware, DOPR schools serve a population of students who are at least one grade level behind or have experienced crises that significantly interfere with academic progress. Traditional academic intervention services target students in regular K-12 grade progression who are struggling to meet grade-level standards, but DOPR schools and our students face additional barriers:

- Parenthood
- Extreme poverty (200% of the federal poverty level)
- Homelessness
- Sexual and/or physical abuse
- Drug and/or alcohol abuse
- Bullying
- Limited English proficiency
- High mobility and family disruptions
- Grade retention/age-for grade
- Being in the foster care system
- Loss of caregivers and parents
- Severe physical and/or mental health condition

DOPR programs offer competency-based instruction, career and technical pathways, credit recovery, and individualized success plans (including for apprenticeships and industry credentials) rather than grade-level remediation. Because our instructional model and student trajectory differ, the typical academic intervention model would not be appropriate. Recognizing that a "one-size-fits-all" intervention model does not fit the DOPR context, we would very much

appreciate allowing our schools to retain that flexibility to design interventions better matched to our students.

Chairman Brenner, as the sponsor of this bill and the Chair of the committee, we cannot thank you enough for speaking with us and understanding that DOPR schools must assess and support the needs of these students through a different framework suited to our unique population rather than the standard prevention and intervention model. We believe it is important to ensure that program design for DOPR students addresses academic deficits, credit gaps, and whatever barrier each student faces. In our case, best practice demands tailored support. Without the proper support for the alternatives our schools provide, many of these students would be high school dropouts living in our communities with the probability of community dependence for an indefinite amount of time. As such, **my colleagues and I ask that Senate Bill 19 be amended to exempt dropout prevention and recovery schools from the required academic intervention services outlined in the bill.**

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.