



Greater Cleveland  
Regional Transit Authority

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**Testimony of the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority  
Ohio Senate Finance Committee  
Interested Party Testimony on House Omnibus Amendment H.C. 2285-1  
May 29, 2025 | Time 9:00 am**

Good morning, Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Finance Committee.

My name is India Birdsong Terry, and I serve as the General Manager & Chief Executive Officer at the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (GCRTA), Ohio's largest public transit agency.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on House Omnibus Amendment H.C. 2285-1. We respectfully continue our opposition to this provision, which would significantly reduce student access to public transit in Ohio's largest 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. Through this partnership, students travel not only to and from school, but also to jobs, afterschool programs, healthcare appointments, and other critical services—using their transit ID cards with no blackout dates or hour restrictions.

This 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, reverting to yellow bus transportation would require an enormous year-long startup investment to acquire buses and hire drivers—costs worsened by driver wage inflation since 2019. Ongoing operations would cost an estimated \$40 million annually beginning in August 2026.

We understand and support the General Assembly's goal of keeping students safe. However, the amendment language would prohibit transfers at staffed "central hubs"—locations specifically designed to provide security, supervision, and convenience. Forcing students to transfer at unstaffed locations with no safety infrastructure does not enhance safety; it compromises it.

Additionally, the amendment language raises federal compliance concerns. As some members of this body have already noted, we cannot afford to put any federal funding to Ohio—especially for public transit—at risk.



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Between July 2024 and March 2025, GCRTA provided over 1.5 million rides to CMSD students, including more than 23,000 weekday evening rides and over 83,000 weekend trips. These figures reflect how essential transit access is for students beyond the classroom.

Beyond our partnership with CMSD, GCRTA also provides reduced fares for eligible students not covered by the district agreement. In 2024, this generated \$374,000 in fare revenue, representing over 213,000 trips taken by students attending suburban, charter, and parochial schools. These students also rely on a safe, connected transit system, and many have no access to yellow bus transportation.

We respectfully urge the General Assembly to remove this language from the bill. Transit systems like GCRTA are committed partners in student safety, working in close coordination with school officials, law enforcement, and community stakeholders. In our case, the GCRTA Transit Police Department plays an active role in maintaining a secure environment for all riders, including youth.

This amendment, while well-intended, would undermine those efforts, place additional operational and financial burdens on transit systems and school districts, and risk important progress we've made together.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to continuing our partnership with the State of Ohio to ensure public transit remains a safe, accessible, and affordable option for all students. I'd be happy to answer any questions.