



Ohio Federation of Teachers

AFT, AFL-CIO

A Union of Professionals

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Senate Finance Committee
SB 298 Proponent Testimony
Presented by Darold Johnson,
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Chair Oelslager, Vice Chair Coley and Ranking member Skindell, I am Darold Johnson, Legislative Director for the Ohio Federation of Teachers. OFT represents 20,000 members who are teachers, paraprofessionals and nurses in Ohio's public schools, high education faculty and staff, and public employees who provide vital services to families and communities across our state. On behalf of our members and the children and families they serve, I appreciate the opportunity to talk with you today about SB 298.

We appreciate Senator Schiavoni introducing this bill to require more detailed attendance reporting by online charter schools. We support the following key provisions in SB298:

- Establishing an E-School Funding Commission to determine the true cost of running online schools.
- Requiring public, online live-streaming of governing board meetings for e-schools, with advanced notice of meetings published in newspapers in communities where the schools' students live.
- Requiring that e-school report cards reflect the spring assessment results for a student who was enrolled at least 90 days in an e-school but subsequently transferred and took the test in the district of residence.
- Requiring online schools to publish a disclaimer showing their state report card grades on all advertising.

- Requiring online schools to keep records of the number of hours each student is participating in coursework daily, and to submit those records to the Ohio Department of Education monthly for online publication.
- Requiring online schools to notify the state, parents and a student's district of residence if the student doesn't log in to school coursework for 10 days straight.
- Requiring a licensed teacher to check attendance logs for accuracy monthly.
- Requiring sponsors to report to ODE when online schools fail to comply with online learning standards.

SB 298 calls the question: Is the legislature going to work in the best interests of children or for adults? I believe you will answer the question correctly. Here is why.

First, the bipartisan federal bill the “Every Student Succeeds Act” passed by Congress in December 2015, requires states and local school districts to develop plans that are based on research, evidence and best practices. What better time than now to undertake the same review for online charter schools. ODE data, altered ODE reports and the State Auditor’s review suggest that more accountability and oversight are needed.

Second, I believe that this committee will favorably act on this bill because you want to hold people accountable for how they use public dollars, and the public wants you to do the same.

Editorials in the Columbus Dispatch and Cleveland Plain Dealer have urged Senator Faber to move this bill. I hope you will protect the interests of the 40,000 students attending online schools as well as the 11 million citizens who want you to be good stewards of their tax dollars.

This concludes my testimony. I welcome any questions you may have.