



**Senate Finance Committee  
Senate Bill 298 Testimony  
Ohio School Boards Association  
Buckeye Association of School Administrators  
Ohio Association of School Business Officials  
May 3, 2016**

Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Coley, Ranking Member Skindell, and members of the Senate Finance Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today regarding our support for Senate Bill (SB) 298 and any other legislation that will provide for more accurate recording and reporting of attendance at Ohio's e-schools. My name is Thomas Ash, and I am the Director of Governmental Relations for the Buckeye Association of School Administrators (BASA). Joining me today for this testimony and in answering your questions are Barbara Shaner, Associate Executive Director for the Ohio Association of School Business Officials (OASBO) and Damon Asbury, Director of Legislative Services for the Ohio School Boards Association.

Our organizations represent public school district boards of education, superintendents, treasurers/ CFOs, business managers and other school business officials from around the state. We are here today as proponents for SB 298.

Media reports over the last few months have highlighted the challenges that Ohio faces in monitoring the attendance of students in e-schools. Reports of findings for recovery in the hundreds of thousands of dollars for students not even enrolled in e-schools darken the promise created by the founding of such schools.

In addition, enrollment at an e-school should not be determined by merely the act of enrolling and the assignment of technology to students. Instead, the use of that technology should be the criterion by which the students are considered to be enrolled.

Recording the time in which a student is actually engaged in learning should not present a challenge to schools whose very instructional delivery is based on a learning technology platform.

Instead, we wade into this issue because of a concern beyond the potential dollars involved. This involves the lost opportunities for learning. A student not engaged in the curriculum of an e-school is equally not engaged in the learning process.

We feel that a positive feature of the proposal is found in proposed ORC 3314.27(D) [lines 2110-2126], which provides that a student's parents, teacher, and principal or head teacher must arrange to confer (even if electronically) if a student's academic performance declines. Certainly, such a decline should be anticipated if the student is not engaged in the e-school's curriculum.

Mr. Chairman, we are not here to present an indictment against all e-schools. Just as there are high performing community schools, there are e-schools that are diligently complying with honest reporting of student attendance as they seek to meet the needs of their students.

However, for those e-schools that are not, it is more than just a matter of possible fraudulent receipt of tax dollars. It is instead a lost opportunity for a student's education.

All three of our organizations have received reports of students who have enrolled in e-schools, apparently languished there without interacting with the school's learning program, and then returned to the resident public school district after an absence of a few to several months. How then does the resident district place the student in the appropriate grade level, not to mention the appropriate subjects at the middle and high school levels.

Surely, the committee senses the need for change from the current policy and practice, and we feel that SB 298 is one such approach. We urge the committee to favorably report the bill.