

Testimony by Amanda Conley, Insight School of Ohio Head of School

May 10, 2016

Good afternoon Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Coley, Ranking Minority Member Skindell, and members of the Senate Finance Committee. My name is Amanda Conley and I am the Head of School at Insight School of Ohio.

Insight School of Ohio was established in 2013 after the 2005 eSchool moratorium was lifted. We were established to fill a need. The Governing Board and authorizer brought forth Insight School of Ohio to provide a school option to students who are struggling academically, socially or emotionally and have barriers impeding them from growing in a traditional brick and mortar setting.

Since 2013 Insight School of Ohio has grown tremendously, giving evidence of the need that we are serving. Our enrollment has went from 493 at the end of the first school year to 1,210 currently enrolled 6-12th grade students. We have students from all 88 counties. Almost 80% come to us having been previously enrolled in a traditional school district. We often work closely with middle and high school principals of those districts to provide an option to their students who have behavior problems or are at an age that they are no longer allowed to attend the school building due to local board policy. Eighteen percent of our population is over eighteen. Thirty of our 2016 Graduates will be 20 and older.

Serving our purpose means serving the struggling student. Twenty-one percent of our population are special education. Over 50% of our high school students come to us already behind their graduation cohort, meaning they are already considered “drop outs” whether they earn their diploma or not. We serve them. We are a School Wide Title I program due to our large amount of economically disadvantaged students.

Our students are resilient and relentless. They have made a choice to work hard and earn their high school diploma despite the challenges I described above. Our graduation classes include young mothers and fathers, enlisted soldiers, homeless children abandoned by their parents and even a small business owner. All very individual backgrounds to which Insight School of Ohio serves their individual needs.

The needs of our individual students drive every effort made by our teaching and engagement staff. Our staff of 40 general education teachers and 17 Special Education teachers provide a robust individualized learning partnership through research-based interventions every day (and sometimes on the weekends). Insight School of Ohio has a staff of 20 additional support roles to help remove barriers and achieve academically. This year the Insight School of Ohio staff selected the slogan of “Power of One” because they believe in the power of each individual student and families’ choice and the power of the opportunities online education provides.

Such opportunities are at-risk of being taken away from Ohio students and families with SB 298. The bill would remove career tech opportunities for eSchool students. Many of our students work full time and deserve the same benefit of earning credits towards graduation that a traditional school student would receive. Online education can be a medium for career tech. The Ohio State University offers a fully online program for a student to earn his nursing degree, yet this bill is going to set back the opportunities for our high school students to be prepared for such online programs they are going to experience in college.

The International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL) is a highly esteemed international non-profit organization providing researched-based professional development, advocacy and the highest of standards. iNACOL standards are used nationally to provide indicators of online learning excellence and evaluate online programs and teacher competency. For Ohio to consider digressing to standards established in 2003 does not align with the vision of transforming Ohio public education to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Insight School of Ohio believes in the "Power of One." We serve individual students with individual needs. Our staff holds their heads high during graduation because they know they provided our students an opportunity to earn their high school diploma that would have otherwise not been available without an online school option. Having been raised in Pike County, I hold my head up high knowing I lead the staff with high accountability in order to offer quality individual opportunities for Ohio students in all 88 counties.