

House Education and Career Readiness Committee
Ohio House of Representatives

May 15, 2018

Re: Testimony on HB 549

Thank you Chairman Brenner, Vice Chairwoman Slaby, Ranking Member Teresa Fedor and members of the House Education and Career Readiness Committee for the opportunity to present testimony on House Bill 549. I also thank Representative Arndt for his hard work in putting this legislation together.

I come to you today as a private citizen, one with both public service and private sector experience. My comments draw from both of these life experiences. I have spent the vast majority of my work life running a small advertising agency in Sandusky, and am now in my 16th year serving on a school board. More recently, about five years ago, my wife and I formalized our interest in education by founding a 501(c)3 foundation to benefit the Sandusky City Schools.

I personally support HB 549, almost in its entirety. The idea that children can actually have a full summer for activities, jobs and family time seems transparently positive. Also, there are some good carve-outs that provide some needed flexibility including the exclusion of year-round schools, summer school programming and administrative time. It also allows districts to honor their commitments to existing collective bargaining agreements and, because of the nature of transportation challenges, it better aligns the transportation needs of public/private schools. And while I generally do not favor having either the state or federal government inserting themselves in local school governance, HB549 allows individual districts to opt out via a deliberative process including a public hearing. Having said that, there are a couple elements over which I have concerns and one area for an outright improvement.

First, if school starts later as HB549 requires, so too should state-mandated testing. As such I encourage annual testing schedules be moved at least 2 weeks later in the year. This provides for an adequate run-up for teaching and learning to be maximized.

Second, there should not be exemptions from the mandates for community and/or charter schools. This bill should not give any differential advantages to these alternatives to public education.

Importantly, I would like to see the bill include a book-end requirement that each school year end before Memorial Day, or June 1 at the latest. My rationale here echoes the sponsors' rationale for HB 549 – namely the benefits to students and families.

If I may, to this point all of my comments about HB 549 have been directed at the benefits for children and families. Those are real. There is also the benefit that extends to young people seeking summer employment. To the extent they are available for a longer period of time, they become more valuable to employers and likely will have a wider range of employment opportunities. This can only serve to better prepare them for their future careers.

I appreciate your attention today and would be happy to answer any questions you might have, here or in the future.