



**Senator Sandra Williams
21st Ohio Senate District**

Committees:

- Public Utilities – Ranking Member
- Ways and Means – Ranking Member
- Energy and Natural Resources
- Insurance and Financial Institutions
- Finance Subcommittee on Higher Ed - Vice Chair

**Senate Bill 82 Sponsor Testimony
Education Committee
March 22, 2017**

Chairwoman Lehner, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Education Committee thank you for the opportunity to offer sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 82.

Senate Bill 82 would require schools to call parents within one hour of the start of the school day, if their child has been marked absent. Currently, Ohio law is silent on school districts contacting parents when their child is absent. The purpose of the Alianna Alert is to take precautionary measures to ensure that every child is safe, specifically those students who are not transported by the school systems.

On January 26, 2017, 14-year-old Alianna DeFreeze went missing in Cleveland, Ohio. She was taking public transportation to school when she disappeared. Reportedly, her mother was not alerted of Alianna's absence from school until 4pm and notified police shortly thereafter. Alianna's mutilated body was found four days later in an abandoned house not far from the Cleveland police station.

It is imperative that parents be notified immediately if their children are not present in school. In a missing person's case, every hour is vital. The search for Alianna could have begun hours earlier if the school had alerted Alianna's mother in a timely manner.

Ohio law only discusses attendance in terms of truancy. Currently, school districts set their own policies about how to alert parents. This bill would standardize the practice and serve to soothe the worries of parents in every district. Only thirteen states have laws that require parents to be notified of a child's first unexcused absence and no state has a law that parents should be notified within an hour. Ohio has the opportunity to be a forefront leader on changing parental notification practices.

In order to protect our community's most vulnerable members we need to enact precautions to make sure children like Alianna have the best chance to be found safely. Senate Bill 82 would enact a policy that would hold school officials accountable for alerting parents of a missing child and would also create a needed safety system. This policy would not only allow for a quicker response time by those involved, but would also put parents at ease, setting a policy that they would be informed right away if their child was absent.

Chairwoman and members of the committee this completes my testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions.