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★ OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL ★

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March 27, 2017

The Honorable Peggy Lehner
Chair, Senate Education Committee
1 Capitol Square
Statehouse Rm. 137
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Chairman Lehner,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a letter in support of Senate Bill 82, legislation that you have sponsored in partnership with Senator Williams, that would require all schools in Ohio to call a child's parents within one hour of the start of the school day if their child has been marked absent without a legitimate excuse.

As you know, protecting Ohio's families and children is our most important mission at the Attorney General's office, and this aims to do that.

There are currently over 600 children listed on the Attorney General's Missing Children online database, which is overseen by the Missing Persons Unit within my office's Bureau of Criminal Investigation. In 2016, over 19,000 children were reported missing in Ohio, and while the vast majority of those were recovered safely, those who have not been found deserve our attention. We should strive to do whatever we can to find and reunite them with their families.

One thing is clear -- those who work in our schools care deeply about our children and many schools already have notification policies in place. However, there is nothing in the Ohio Revised Code that sets baseline standards for schools to contact parents if their child has not reported to school. This legislation would set a reasonable timetable for schools to contact parents, thus giving families, school officials, and law enforcement as much time as possible to ensure a child's safety.

Very respectfully yours,

Mike DeWine
Ohio Attorney General