



Ohio Senate Finance Committee
Senator Scott Oelslager, Chair

Testimony of Craig Burford, Executive Director
Ohio Educational Service Center Association

June 6, 2017

Chairman Oelslager, Ranking Minority Member Skindell, and members of the Senate Finance Committee thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

We are seeking your support of amendments to Am. Sub. H.B. 49, the FY 2018-2019 state operating budget, that would flat fund ESCs and School Improvement relative to FY 2017 while freeing up over \$1.4 million to help address the projected budget shortfall.

In this difficult budget environment, flat funding of ESCs is a necessary investment to insure we have a stable, cost-effective statewide system of support for school improvement and related educational support services.

Our proposal can be accomplished by reallocating funding from the ESC School Improvement earmark to the ESC operating subsidy earmark within the 200-550 foundation funding line item.

The subsidy pays for the operation of the ESC and any services required under the Revised Code. As you likely know, ESCs are responsible for the coordination of all cooperative special education programs in the state. ESCs are also required to implement any services charged to them by the Ohio General Assembly and the Ohio Department of Education.

Why support ESCs? In a difficult budget environment, it makes sense to provide stability for ESCs for the following reasons:

1. ESCs have decentralized staff to reduce facilities costs and travel expenses and insure responsive and direct customer support (only 6% central office staff);

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2. ESCs are lean organizations insuring the majority of expenditures go toward supporting direct provision of services to students and educators (4% operational costs);
3. ESCs save districts substantial money that can be reallocated for other instructional purposes (32% average cost savings - \$54.1 million across just 5 service areas);
4. ESCs identify and leverage outside funding sources to maximize the impact of state and local funding for K-12 education (\$153.9 million);
5. ESCs have experienced personnel to assist in school improvement (500+ personnel trained in OIP) and curriculum and instruction (600+ Curriculum staff) among other areas;
6. ESCs reduce planning time so schools can focus on their core mission of educating kids; and
7. ESCs assist with compliance in federal and state regulations.

The state operating subsidy the General Assembly provides for ESCs enables us to open our doors and lays a foundation that allows for these positive things to happen.

I can think of no other state, regional, or local government agency demonstrating this level of efficiency, transparency, accountability or return on investment, all of which accrue to the direct benefit of the state and school districts.

For these reasons, the state has a clear interest in maintaining funding support for ESCs relative to FY 2017 for both the ESC operating subsidy and school improvement.

Thank you for your positive consideration and I would be happy to address any questions.