

HB 49 Testimony
June 6th or 7th
Josh Straus
Logan-Hocking Local School District

Dear Senator Oelslager and Distinguished Members of the Committee:

Thank you for allowing me to offer testimony on HB 49. My name is Josh Straus and I work in the Logan-Hocking Local School District - a countywide, rural school district in Southeast Ohio. After reading through the budget proposal I wanted to share some concerns that I have with the proposed transportation formula. Specifically reducing the 50% funding multiplier to 37.5% in FY 2018 then to 25% in FY 2019. To give you an idea of how this change would impact us, I would like to give you a brief snapshot of our district.

The Logan-Hocking Local School District currently travels on average a staggering 722,880 miles per year, roughly 4,016 miles per day, transporting students to and from school. LHSD is ranked ninth among school districts regarding the number of square miles in the district, so we cover a fairly large area geographically. We currently have 42 busses that run 81 routes daily to transport our students. Our average total membership is 3,867 students, while approximately 60% of those students qualify for free and reduced lunch. The average income in our district is \$44,918.00, significantly below the state average of \$76,621.00. In FY 16 we spent roughly 2.7 million to transport our students. We had to supplement that budget with approximately \$500,000.00 of general fund money. My concern lies with the disparity between the cost of transporting our students compared to the average family income. It is a real possibility that a large percentage of our students will never make it to school if the burden falls on their parents (our students ride the bus to school).

Another concern I have is the cost of bus replacement. Currently our oldest bus 12 years old with around 240,000 miles. The average age of our bus fleet is 6 years with well over 100,000 miles. The current cost to replace a bus is in the \$80,000 to \$100,000 range with that number seeming to go up every year. As you all know all school bus purchasing assistance was stopped in 2009. Under HB 49, with a larger percentage of the transportation budget falling on the district and no bus purchasing assistance, the task of maintaining a safe, efficient transportation system for our students becomes next to impossible.

In our particular district, supplementing the transportation budget out of the general fund even further pull from staffing and educational programming budgets. I hope that you can also see placing the burden of transporting students on our parents is not a reliable way to get our students to school, considering the financial constraints they already face. In conclusion, I sincerely hope that you will consider the following recommendations:

Recommendations

I would urge the Senate to reconsider and keep the 50% multiplier as it is in the current budget. Again, it would be detrimental to our district to cut the multiplier in half.

I would also recommend that the Senate consider increasing supplemental transportation funding to districts, such as ours, with low wealth and low population density.

Lastly, I would recommend reinstating bus purchasing funds in order for districts to maintain a reasonable replacement cycle for busses.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak with you today.