

Chairwoman Lehner, Vice Chair Terhar, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Senate Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in favor of keeping HB 154, as passed by the House, in the budget bill. My name is Brittany Alexander. I am an educator of 22 years and an advocate for our children.

I am especially grateful for the work of Representatives Don Jones and Joe Miller to introduce this important legislation and to the House for passing it overwhelmingly. Furthermore, its inclusion in the budget bill means the 2019 - 2020 school year can begin with these provisions in place. Parts of my testimony below are repeated from proponent testimony I submitted to the House Committee on Primary and Secondary Education when they were considering HB 154.

To my knowledge, state takeovers have not successfully improved student learning anywhere they have been implemented. After nearly four years, and with two of the three districts currently under receivership in utter chaos, it is time to recognize that this approach is not working for Ohio either.

The goal of HB 154 is to restore local control by dissolving current academic distress commissions and requiring a community-centered plan of action for improvement instead. The involvement of community stakeholders regarding performance and improvement plans for **their** children and **their** schools is precisely what HB 70 lacks.

I teach in a suburb of Columbus, and so my professional world is a far cry from that of my colleagues in Youngstown, Lorain, and many other places across Ohio. I cannot help but to wonder how different things might look for Youngstown and Lorain had we addressed equity and adequacy of school funding as aggressively as we pursued accountability measures over the past two decades. I submit to you that these districts are not failing. They have been and are continuing to be failed by the state. Right now, we have an opportunity to begin to repair what has been broken by state takeovers. Right now, this committee can make a difference for not just our kids, but for whole communities.

We may never know the undemocratic sting of having the state usurp the power of our elected school board in my district, but that is not a certainty. And even if it were, it would do nothing to calm my troubled thoughts. I cannot stop thinking of the pleas from so many educators, parents, students, and community members over the past few years. They want to be involved in establishing a path forward. They want to be heard. Give them an opportunity to be part of the solution for improving their schools together by keeping this language in HB 166. It is the least we can do after wreaking such havoc on already underserved schools.

I urge you to keep HB 154 language, as passed by the House, in the budget bill to allow this community-centered legislation to take effect prior to the 2019 - 2020 school year. I thank you for your time and your consideration.