

**SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE  
PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**

May 29, 2019

Make Ohio Schools Stronger Through Collaborative  
Transformation



**INTERESTED PARTY TESTIMONY**

Dr. Eugene T. W. Sanders

Chief Executive Officer and Superintendent of Sandusky City Schools

&

President of the Ohio Mid-Sized Urban Districts Leadership Collaborative

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Burke, Ranking Minority Member Sykes and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to submit interested party testimony on House Bill 166. My name is Eugene Sanders and I currently serve as the Chief Executive Officer and Superintendent in my hometown of Sandusky. The Sandusky City Schools recently received national recognition for our Global Internship Program. I have 39 years of experience in education in Ohio including serving as: a teacher; a high school administrator; a tenured professor of Educational Administration and Department Chair for the Doctoral Program in Leadership Studies at Bowling Green State University, where I published a textbook on Urban School Leadership: Issues and Strategies; the former CEO and Superintendent for the Toledo Public Schools from 2000-2006, where we were the first urban district in Ohio to reach the status of Continuous Improvement; and, the Chief Executive Officer for the Cleveland Metropolitan School District from 2006-2011, where I was the original visionary architect of the Cleveland Transformation Plan, which was recently revised and approved by the Ohio Legislature as an acceptable plan avoiding inclusion in the Academic Distress Commission deliberations.

I am here today primarily in my capacity as the President of the Ohio Mid-Sized Urban Districts Leadership Collaborative, which is a collection of over a dozen mid-sized urban districts comprised of superintendents, teacher union presidents, and curriculum supervisors (see attached list). This grass roots organization was formed as a result of school leaders seeking innovative and creative ways to improve student achievement. Our districts serve medium-sized urban areas with roughly 75,000-300,000 residents. Our students and communities have the same urban challenges of: poverty, high rates of incarceration, substance abuse, homelessness, and high rates of mobility.

In the interest of keeping my testimony concise, I would like to focus on four specific areas.

- **Eliminate ADCs.** Based on my nearly 40 years of experience, I strongly advise this body to abolish and totally eliminate the Academic Distress Commission state takeover model. The state takeover model has resulted in poorer performance, school dysfunction, and significant community unrest. I have been working with the Lorain, East Cleveland, and Youngstown City Schools and I am confident the opportunity for improvement will be greatly enhanced when the ADC is abolished and the locally elected school board members are able to implement change and reform, but with cooperation, collaboration, integration, and collegiality, which includes parent and community engagement.

- **We support peer-to-peer networking.** Our organization, the Ohio Mid-Sized Urban Districts Leadership Collaborative is a peer-to-peer model and is fully committed to working with these challenging school districts through our peer-to-peer leadership integrated design. This effort allows us to hold each other accountability while having the capacity to offer best practices. We are successfully using educational rounds, with robust and critical feedback on the district's instructional practices. We believe it is better to work together in a collaborative manner to help each other succeed.
  
- **We support ODE technical support and intensive coaching.** A Post-ADC educational environment requires technical support by the Ohio Department of Education through professional development, training, and collective efficacy strategies aimed at addressing social emotional and behavioral approaches to impact high poverty challenging communities. HB154, which was incorporated into HB166 in the House-passed version of the budget, provides for such technical support.
  
- **We support local school district accountability.** After the ADC is abolished, the Ohio Mid-Sized Urban Districts Leadership Collaborative supports strong accountability through:
  - a) an independent leadership support specialist reporting directly to the BOE to provide critical feedback to the BOE regarding the effective implementation of a transformation plan;
  - b) termination of the Superintendent if the academic goals identified by the BOE and the Superintendent are not accomplished;
  - c) quarterly board retreats where there is transparent reporting to the public on the progress of the district; and,
  - d) integrated support of the State Support Team with individuals with proven experience of improving student performance in challenging school districts and communities.

Nearly four decades ago I entered into education because I wanted to make a difference in the lives of children. Today, all educators are in this business because we believe that education is the foundation of opportunity in our nation. Eliminating the ADC, returning the authority to locally elected officials, and working in collaborative with similar organizations that have found success will improve our school districts, our cities, our state, and our productivity and economic wellbeing. Thank you for allowing me to testify today. I would be happy to answer any questions.



**Sandusky City Schools**

**Alliance City Schools**

**Lima City Schools**

**Warren City Schools**

**Mt. Healthy City Schools**

**Trotwood-Madison City Schools**

**Painesville City Local Schools**

**North Collee Hill City Schools**

**Marion City Schools**

**Finneytown Local Schools**

**Huber Heights City Schools**

**Mansfield City Schools**

**South Euclid-Lyndhurst City Schools**