

Chair Senator Lehner
Vice Chair Senator Brenner
Distinguished Members of the Committee

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. It is an honor and a privilege for ordinary citizens like me to be able to speak to our elected leaders as they enact the laws that govern us. My prayer today is that you will hear this testimony and begin to understand, if in a small way, the impact of your decisions on our state's most vulnerable children.

First I'd like to address a common misconception regarding how urban districts ended up with failing report card grades. Poor decisions by a Board of Education and Poor quality teaching are not the root causes. School choice caused the systematic dismantling of a quality education in urban districts. Cherry picking of our top students to nearby suburban districts through open enrollment, vouchers and charter schools led to dropping report card scores. This does not mean I am advocating ending school choice, it is an opportunity for an improved education for many in the state, but it is in this context that I urge you to consider the reality that no strategy or intervention, instructional framework or shift in power will elevate the overall scores when top performers will forever be exiting our urban districts.

This is the context I need you to imagine: schools where the culture is "we come here to learn" versus schools where the culture is "we come here to be fed and loved, and because there's no one at home to take care of us", in fact, esteemed Senators, with all the resources the state provides parents in poverty, some older siblings (more than I can count on my fingers and toes) stay home to provide child care for working parents many days out of the school year. Imagine for a moment this world of unintended consequences. Where in theory, a CEO with power over a Board of education in a failing district is the answer, but in reality, it makes things even worse for students than they were.

In a world of unintended consequences...

- The CEO first focuses on instructional framework in lieu of student discipline and school culture, report card grades continue to drop after framework is in place a year.

In a world of unintended consequences...

- CEO announced on the news that all school supplies will now be provided by the schools. Exactly two pencils are sent with the backpacks. There is no supply room. I cannot make it to the store each and every day, nor can I afford to supply pencils to 18 children for an entire school year. Something as minute as a pencil now carries emotional baggage with it, due to the CEOs broken promise.

In a world of unintended consequences...

- CEO implements "Restorative Practices" as a discipline model for the district. No one in the district is trained enough to clearly define the practice. As a result, students are

almost never receiving any type of discipline in school. On May 14, 2019 a father was arrested after pushing my principal and punching his kindergarten son. The WKBN news article stated: “He apologized for pushing the teacher but said he has been called to the school repeatedly for issues with his son.” Of course, we could never advocate physical abuse on children, however, this father had reached his limit with the school not providing discipline for his son to learn how to behave.

In a world of unintended consequences...

Proven with Data driven results	Were replaced with
Literacy Collaborative Framework	Dibels
Project Lead the Way	Stem Fuse
Literacy tutors working with small groups	iStation Computer program

Homeroom teachers are expected to implement with fidelity iStation, Stem Fuse, and SEL lessons as well as tiered interventions for all students in a one hour a day class period.

In a world of unintended consequences...

- Neighborhood PreK-8th grade schools are reformed from previously existing program academies, but there was no plan in place for middle school music programs. For an entire year, band and orchestra for middle school students disappeared, cutting off the feeder program for high school marching band and a community left confused whether Chaney High School would be fielding a marching band with the return of the 2019 Chaney Cowboys football team.

Now, where does that leave us in Youngstown? We have masses of children living daily through trauma with significant emotional and behavioral needs. We have an Academic Distress Commission that had members resigning left and right, which needed to be reappointed by government officials. There is a misconception that the ADC provides oversight of the CEO. The Academic Distress Commission has exactly two functions: (1) hire the CEO and (2) listen to the CEO & his chiefs give status reports once a month. That ends their power.

Let me repeat that, the Academic Distress Commission does not pull rank over the CEO the way a Board of Education has oversight over a superintendent. Did anyone ever stop to consider why so many ADC members resigned? In Youngstown we’ve had a CEO with completely unchecked power, who left office months before his contract expires. We are presently left with dozens of chiefs and deputy chiefs, who don’t know our children or their families. Many of whom do not communicate as evidenced by conflicting directives.

Regarding concerns with student discipline, Taft Elementary has had 9 administrators come and go in 2 years (2017-2019). In Fall 2017 a parent allegedly assaulted a teacher in that building and no one could explain how that could have happened. The CEO promised to

investigate, but teachers were not convinced we are safe at work. That child was moved into my home room at Wilson. Fortunately I didn't have the same issues with the student or mother because the family knew me. I'd had 3 uncles, an aunt and a cousin of hers in my classes over the years. I'd even attended her grandmother's funeral.

Comparison of what we have versus what we need:

Current Law (HB70)	Proposed HB154
CEO with unchecked power	Oversight by Superintendent, School Board and Ohio Department of Education
One size fits all sweeping changes across entire district, disregard for progress in individual schools (referred to in DeMaria's report as "nuanced improvement")	Each building deemed "in need of improvement" forms its own school improvement team and develops a plan unique to their needs
Takes 3 years of "F" grade before action taken	Intervention begins with the first grade of "F" (also listed in DeMaria report as a recommendation)
Not enough time given for district to show improvement before sanctions kick in	ODE oversight increases with Plan intervention after 2 years of still "in need of improvement"

In conclusion, as a teacher, I am responsible to uphold 7 professional standards for teaching. Among them are "knowledge of students" and "differentiation". The current policy ignores both of these requirements of a quality education. House Bill 154 would enable all 7 standards of effectiveness to design the landscape for improvement based on individual school needs. Please remember as you vote that our children in Youngstown need your support. At this moment in time they believe they've been forsaken.

Thank You.
 Respectfully Submitted,
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