

June 12, 2019

Chair Lehner, Vice Chair Terhar, Ranking Minority Member Fedor and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit interested party testimony on House Bill 166; specifically, directed to the language on the Academic Distress Commission (ADC)/School Improvement Commission (SIC).

Please accept the following:

There is no evidence that ADCs/Mayoral Control have been any more successful than local control. Renaming the ADC to SIC will not change that.

There is no evidence that ADCs/mayoral control have even, marginally, increased performance measures. (All facts and figures, herein, are per the ODE website unless otherwise noted). It should be noted that these schools fell under academic distress many years before the dates provided, below.

1. The Cleveland Plan, under the direction of Mayor Jackson, was submitted to Governor Kasich in February 2012. The most recent Overall Report Card Grade is listed as F.
2. The Youngstown ADC adopted an Academic Recovery Plan in June 2010. A new plan, under the direction of the current ADC, was adopted during the outgoing CEO's tenure from 2016 to 2019. One may assume that the recently hired CEO will develop his own plan. The most recent Overall Report Card Grade is listed as F.
3. The Lorain ADC adopted the Lorain Academic and Recovery Plan in November 2015. The CEO from 2017 to present has provided a new plan under the direction of the current ADC. The most recent Overall Report Card Grade is listed as F.
4. East Cleveland's current ADC had their first meeting in December 2018. A plan by the recently appointed CEO will be forthcoming. The most recent Overall Report Card Grade is listed as F.
5. Currently Dayton Public Schools have an Overall Report Card Grade of F for two consecutive years. Schools in Ashtabula, Canton, Columbus, Euclid, Lima, Mansfield, North College Hill, Painesville and Toledo have Overall Report Card Grades of F for one year.

Also, instructive are the most recent Overall Report Card results for public schools as compared to community schools, presented, below.

Focus improvement efforts on community schools as well as public schools

The following table presents FY2017/2018 Overall Report Card Grades:

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Public Schools</u>	<u>Community Schools</u>
A	5 percent	2 percent
B	31 percent	10 percent
C	42 percent	21 percent
D	20 percent	37 percent
F	2 percent	30 percent

If the goal is to provide a strong educational base for all Ohio students, what is the plan for the thirty percent of community schools that are rated F? Is the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) tracking the number of years these schools receive consecutive F-grades? Is this information being provided to the Senate Education Committee? Further, at the college-level a 2.0 out of a 4.0 scale, or a C, is typically required to maintain good academic standing. Is the State satisfied that performance at a D-level is preparing students for successful futures? What is being done to address this, if anything?

How do Overall Report Card Grades correlate to Graduation Rates?

Of concern is the four-year graduation rates for public and community schools. Either the existing Report Card and standardized tests are not adequately measuring overall performance appropriate for graduating students or students are being graduating without mastering the skills necessary to achieve success in the future. Seventy-eight percent of public schools score a C or above on the Overall Report Card while ninety-two percent of students are being graduated at a C or above. Only thirty-three percent of community schools rate D or better. Graduation rates for community schools were unable to be calculated due to non-reported information. This, obviously, assumes that the Report Card rubric is a reasonable measure by which to rate schools. How will this issue be addressed under the proposed legislation?

Challenged school districts and reconstitution of public schools

As of FY 2017/2018, 218 public school districts or 36 percent of all school districts were listed by the ODE as “challenged.” House Bill 70 provides for the opening of community schools in these districts and further provides for the transfer of failing public schools to charter schools. It appears that similar language to reconstitute schools; with community schools being an option, is in HB166. Based on the statistics presented, above, it makes no logical sense to reconstitute any school to a community school or any other option. If the underlying reasons for “failure” are not addressed, merely changing the form of the school will make no difference. The following report from Stanford on Ohio charter schools will provide additional reference:

http://credo.stanford.edu/pdfs/OH_state_report_2019.pdf

Comparison of ADC/Mayoral Control Results as compared to schools with similar demographics

The following table lists FY2017/2018 Ohio Report Card results and other metrics for Sandusky, Steubenville (selected for their similar demographics) and the districts currently under ADC/mayoral control in comparison to State averages:

FY2017/2018	<u>Sandusky</u>	<u>Steubenville</u>	<u>Cleveland</u>	<u>Youngstown</u>	<u>Lorain</u>	<u>East Cleveland</u>	<u>State Average</u>
Attendance Rate	93.2%	95.4%	91.0%	89.9%	87.2%	88.0%	
Economically Disadvantaged	98.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	99.9%	97.4%	
Spending Per Pupil	\$9,721	\$7,259	\$11,707	\$12,804	\$9,489	\$12,725	\$9,353
Classroom Instruction	\$6,873	\$4,332	\$7,503	\$7,488	\$6,206 (A)	\$7,386	\$6,326
Non-classroom	\$2,847	\$2,927	\$4,177	\$5,316	\$3,283 (A)	\$5,339	\$3,027
Overall	C	B	F	F	F	F	
Achievement	D	B	F	F	F	F	
Progress	B	A	F	D	F	F	
Gap Closing	B	A	D	F	F	F	
Graduation Rate	D	A	F	F	F	F	
Improving At-Risk K-3 Readers	D	A	D	D	D	D	
Prepared for Success	F	F	F	F	F	F	

(A) Based on FY2018/2019, it is expected that Lorain spending figures would be more heavily weighted to non-classroom spending due to hiring of fifty plus administrators.

Note the difference in Report Card results for Sandusky and Steubenville in comparison to those schools under ADC/mayoral control. Although Sandusky and Steubenville are not necessarily comparable in size to all the listed school districts, the process for improvement would be similar. It would be instructive to determine how Sandusky and Steubenville are obtaining results while keeping spending within the State averages. There are most likely other districts with similar demographics that are showing results that could be reviewed and replicated; for example, the Akron Public Schools - I Promise School with support from LeBron James' Foundation shows early promise. Or course, Mr. James wouldn't have it any other way. Why isn't the same care being taken for other students living in poverty throughout the State? Why isn't the I Promise model being replicated throughout the State?

Note that Sandusky and Steubenville spending per pupil, per classroom and per non-classroom spending fall in line with State averages. Under the ADC models, on average, the districts report higher spending per pupil with a much greater percentage of spending devoted to non-classroom expenditures. Please, again, note the Overall Report Card Grade results.

Supports provided by the ODE

Instead of forming a State Transformation Board (STB) and an SIC, why aren't current resources at the ODE being used effectively? One would think the staff at the ODE would be in place because of their expertise in education and educational improvement.

The ODE Office for Improvement and Innovation is in place to assist schools in increasing student outcomes and in increasing engagement with families and community. The Support Teams also provide additional information and support for some of the most vulnerable student populations. Are these resources being used effectively to support schools in high poverty areas? Financial analysis and fiscal oversight of any spending might be supported through the Office of Finance to ensure fiscal accountability to not just districts in academic distress not all districts and community schools. Based on the information in the table, above, it doesn't appear that ODE has had a strong focus on fiscal accountability. Perhaps a true partnership between the schools and the ODE would improve results for all schools without forming a board, commissions and hiring outside consultants.

Direct classroom supports vs. administrative costs

It stands to reason that struggling schools would require more direct classroom supports and focus on wrap-around services rather than additional spending on administration; as detailed in the table, above. There is a fiduciary duty to spend taxpayer funds in a responsible way that leads to positive results. Has that been occurring under the ADC model? Would it occur under the proposed STB/SIC model? Could existing funds be better allocated to direct classroom and wrap-around supports?

It is easy to use administrators and teachers in every district where poverty rates are high as scapegoats; which reasoning is not logical, on its face. There is an underlying reason for the "failure" – it is poverty and the trauma it creates in our children. Senator Lehner has noted the poverty issue and the achievement gap time and time again in various newspaper quotes and in her comments during the Senate Floor Debate on HB 70 on June 24, 2015, where she noted that the community learning center with wrap-around services, Oyler School in Cincinnati, had determined how to effectively address poverty issues so that children might learn – the most recent Overall Report Card Grade of Oyler is F. Obviously, the poverty/achievement gap issue was not adequately addressed and sustained over time.

If the appropriate supports are not provided to students and teachers to address the trauma that comes with living in poverty, no plan will be successful. It's incumbent on the Legislature to recognize this and address supports prior to the start of the 2019/2020 school year. This cannot be done from Columbus nor can it be done by a board, commission or consultants; but must be done locally. There is no substitute for those that are on the ground, every day, focusing on improvement. The proposed language in HB 166 provides that new plans to be put in place for "failing" schools using consultants. It's unfathomable that the State would delay improvement by waiting for another plan to be developed, when a fiscally responsible and results-based plan has been presented. (See my testimony on Wrap-Around Services provided to the Senate Finance Committee on June 5, 2019, that might be suggested to support any school in a high

poverty area and testimony given by Dr. Sanders, CEO and Superintendent of Sandusky City Schools and the President of the Ohio Mid-Sized Urban Districts Leadership Collaborative, to the Senate Education Committee on May 29, 2019). Having spent my career focusing on process improvement and corporate/departmental turnarounds, there is no substitute for an employee that is in the trenches, every day, rather than a consultant, a commission or a board that has no real day-to-day connection to the business at hand or to the community. (Note the abject failure of the school districts currently under an ADC). Having taught at the college-level where I was merely handed a book and some general guidelines on what to cover my first year, the support and ideas of other professors/instructors made all the difference.

I taught at a university with an average ACT score of 29. I also taught evenings and summers at an open-enrollment college. In each setting, we taught the same material and adjusted the level of challenge in testing to the classroom. All students learned the basics of accounting. Quite frankly, I never gave a thought to a standardized test score. I did have a student advisor share the ACT score of a student insinuating that I should go easy on him; the score was a 12. I noticed early on that this young man was very thoughtful and precise during testing. He would always ask for additional time to finish. To be fair, I told him I couldn't give him additional time if not offered to other students. I did, however, send him for testing by the Learning Center and he, in fact, qualified for extra time during testing. One wonders how this young man made it to the sophomore year in college without the proper support. To his credit, he earned a B in the course; HE earned it. I just provided the supports needed. Of course, I and every teacher could give you many, many examples of providing what students need so they can achieve.

I would never compare teaching at the college level with teaching K-12. Teachers in high poverty districts are drinking from the firehose every day; true support from the ODE and the Legislature would go a long way in improving educational results State-wide. I would highly recommend the Senate Education Committee give schools the support they need to educate Ohio's children; adding layers through a board, a commission and consultants will not get the results that are needed just as the ADC model has not. Only true collaboration between parties will begin to make a difference.

This summer might also be a perfect time to look at other issues that will strengthen Ohio Schools. I would imagine teachers/superintendents/administrators would volunteer to provide input and best practices to the following:

- Discuss ideas for successful programming so that students will want to attend school and will begin to see a path forward for themselves. For example, Ms. Nell Rapport, Painesville City Schools, has an award winning entrepreneurship program that could be replicated, VITA Tax Programs might be staffed by students each tax season, Mock Trial programs might be formed, the Green Bronx Machine gardening program might be replicated, form partnerships with trade/apprenticeship programs, etc. It's a given that educators would have many ideas; if asked.
- Determine whether the twenty-three State standardized tests are a good measurement of student performance and whether the format of the tests is appropriate. (I am aware that Representative Manning has recently introduced legislation regarding testing).

- Review and make recommendations to the existing Report Card structure prior to the upcoming school year. Set short-term and long-term goals for struggling schools/buildings with ODE support. Metrics/goals to be:
 - a. Easy to understand
 - b. Measurable
 - c. Under the control of the school district/community school
 - d. Achievable
 - e. With input from those doing the work

Thank you for the opportunity,

K. L. Kennedy