

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

June 12, 2019

A Need to Reform Academic Distress Commissions



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 Lehner, Vice Chair Terhar, Ranking Minority Member Fedor and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to submit interested party testimony on the proposed amendment to House Bill 166 regarding Academic Distress Commissions. The proposed comprehensive and extensive modifications to the House-passed provisions regarding ADCs clearly demonstrates that the ADC model currently in law does not have strong legislative support.

Thank you for hearing us and agreeing to make necessary changes. However, to roll out a 62-page amendment with such comprehensive and extensive changes to include an entirely new governing structure with less than 24 hours to digest, is House Bill 70 all over again. As policy makers, why would we make the same mistake twice?

While the House-passed version is not complete, it is a very solid step one because:

1. It eliminates ADCs;
2. Restores local control; and,
3. Creates a moratorium on adding new schools to ADC control.

We can then use the summer and fall to more fully vet the various initiatives in the proposed changes to ADCs.

SPECIFIC CONCERNS

1. At first blush, the new structure appears to be overly bureaucratic and complicated.
2. The locally-elected school boards would be displaced by non-elected appointees. This same lack of accountability has caused serious management and oversight issues under the current ADC structure.
3. A non-voting member is often a disinterested member. Why is the union representative non-voting? The teachers are the front line of delivering our services to the students. The teachers need to be supportive for successful change.
4. You require the local school improvement commission members to be from the same county. As a representative of mid-sized urban school districts, there is often a large urban district and several small rural districts in the county. We need true peer support, not simply neighbors from the same county on the school improvement commissions.

In conclusion, many of the provisions set forth in the proposed amendment could lead us to better policy initiatives for improving academic performance and we may end up supporting many of these changes. However, 24 hours is not sufficient. Thank you for allowing me to testify today. I would be happy to answer any questions.