

## 95<sup>th</sup> House District

Washington, Noble, Belmont,  
Harrison, and Carroll Counties

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**Don Jones**  
State Representative

### Committees

Primary and Secondary  
Education, Vice-Chair

Agriculture and Rural  
Development

Commerce and Labor

Transportation and Public  
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Joint Education Oversight  
Committee

Chairman Lehner, Vice-Chairman Terhar, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Senate Education Committee, I thank you for allowing me to offer sponsor testimony on HB 154.

Simply put, HB 154 is a repeal of HB 70 from the 131st General Assembly. While the law regarding Academic Distress Commissions (ADC) were passed with the best of intentions, it has failed miserably, and it is underserving kids.

It's our job to support quality education, and right now we as the state are over stepping our bounds. Presently, the ADC functions with 5 members. Three, or the majority of those members, are appointed by the state, one is appointed by the local district board, and the final one by the mayor. There is no question it is a state takeover that usurps the will of the people by disabling the duly elected school board.

This is a problem because the state is not capable of running a local district with individual and unique needs, which is why we have local school boards, and why they need to be empowered and helped – not sidelined, and thrown a life preserver after already drowning.

HB 154 reasserts local control. When there is a lack of local control there are many side effects. First, as I've already mentioned, is that the ADC and the appointed CEO may not know the district very well. Second, is the loss of morale in the school, as well as in the community. When the community support for a school is lost, the school suffers even more. There is no way for the community to reengage in the school because the power has been taken away from the school board, and that can only return if the school district improves, which after years of trying- none have.

This bill puts a focus back on community by establishing Community Learning Centers (CLC) for failing schools. In summary, the bill would:

- Dissolve all current academic distress commissions and repeal the law on establishing new commissions;
- Require the implementation of a community learning center model for schools within the districts for which an academic distress commission had previously been established or school that are determined as low-performing by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) for 3 consecutive years; and
- Requires the ODE to provide administrative and organizational support in the implantation of the CLC.

Additionally, the bill would require:

- In the first year that a school is determined to be low-performing, the district must convene a group of community stakeholders to conduct a performance audit and review of the school and develop an improvement plan and hire a resource coordinator for the school;

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- In years two and three, the district must finalize and implement the improvement plan and CLC model;
- The school action team must submit its improvement plan directly to the district board for evaluation and adoption

Providing these examples, we're not saying for the state to shirk its responsibilities and have no involvement. This bill requires the Ohio Department of Education to use their immense resources -- such as assistance, facilitation, training and financial support -- in concert with the school districts, but the state is not running the show.

The short of it is that we need to do right by our kids. The current model of state control is not working, and shows no signs of being able to work. Right now we have some busted pipes under the sink. We're not just shutting off the water, we're also fixing the broken pipes

Chairman Lehner, Vice-Chairman Terhar, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Senate Education Committee, I thank you for allowing me to offer sponsor testimony on HB 154, my joint-sponsor has submitted written testimony, and I look forward to any questions you may have. Thank you.