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September 17, 2019

Chair Lehner and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 154. My name is Spencer Geraghty, I am an intervention specialist with the Canton City School District. House Bill 154 has been something we in Canton have kept a close eye on for a few years. In keeping a close eye on the situation, an analogy with a bus and a ditch is used quite often.

In keeping with that theme, let us examine another method of transportation: the train. From January of 2010 to June of 2019, the Federal Railroad Administration reported a total of 12,552 derailments.

The second leading cause of derailment was human error, accounting for 32% of all derailments. Within the broad category of human error, improper switch alignment was the leading cause, accounting for 5.5% of all derailments.

The average train weighs about 10,000 tons or 20,000,000 pounds. The average speed of a train is about 60mph. A train of average weight, and average speed, will require a little over a mile to come to a complete stop. As a result of these facts, there are not 90 degree turns in train tracks. A sudden change in direction will spell disaster. The preferred minimum for curve distance is 574 feet, or a 10 degree turn. Change of direction is not sudden for a train. It must be done intentionally through a switch on the track. This change can be done by computer or, in some instances, a manual adjustment of the switch. What happens when a switch is improperly aligned?

Since January of 2010, the Federal Railroad Administration reports 694 occurrences of derailment because of improper switch alignment. Someone, somewhere, did not do their job and disaster ensued. These 694 derailments resulted in approximately 46 million dollars of damage and 44 injuries, none fatal. In the case of every derailment the engineer was traveling with a clear destination in mind. They had a plan to get somewhere. Human error, not necessarily their own, prohibited them reaching their destination.

Every school district has a clear destination in mind, the success of students. Additionally, they have a plan to get to their destination. Somewhere along the way a switch was activated, diverting their current path of travel. Sometimes these switches are activated in Washington D.C., sometimes Columbus, sometimes the school district itself.

The average school district enrollment, according to the Ohio Department of Education, is 2,602 students. A change in direction means putting students, families, staff, and the community, as a whole, on a new track. In districts where the path of travel is careening towards failure, there is no doubt a new track must be taken. Just as a 20,000,000 pound train is unable to change tracks at a moments notice, changes in the direction of a school district must not be sudden.

There is no one size fits all solution. There are no quick fixes. House Bill 154 allows for change to happen incrementally, over the span of six years. Not rushing into sudden change will allow for greater stability within school districts, promoting buy-in of all stakeholders. When communities are engaged, impactful change is made. Ownership

of problems move from personal attacks to pragmatic solutions. Students in Ohio should not be derailed by sudden changes. House Bill 154 does a great deal to keep education on track, minimizing sudden change.

Shifting now to the leading cause of derailment, track related issues account for 40.8% of all derailments. Within the broad category of track related issues, defective or missing crossties is the leading cause, accounting for 6.8% of all derailments.

For those that may not know, crossties are perpendicular rail supports. They sit under the track, providing foundational support for the entire system of rail transportation. Crossties hold everything together, keeping the rail at a fixed width and absorbing the forces exhibited by the weight of a locomotive. This system of support undergirds every single mile of rail in the United States; there is one crosstie every 1.6 feet, approximately 3,250 crossties per mile, 455,000,000 throughout the country as a whole. While this amount of support may seem excessive to some, the results are clear when crossties are missing or defective.

Since January of 2010 the Federal Railroad Administration reports 858 occurrences of derailment because of missing or defective crossties. Over time the system of support was reduced, resulting in disaster. These 858 derailments resulted in approximately 69 million dollars in damage and 8 injuries, none fatal. A train is as good as the rail upon which it travels. The rail is as good as the underlying system of support. The system of support must be assessed, updated, and upgraded to ensure safe travel.

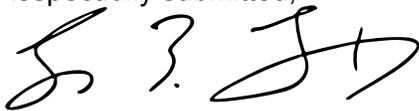
House Bill 154 allows for updated and upgraded systems of support. Already, the 133rd General Assembly has passed a budget that bolsters wrap-around services. Appropriations for wrap-around services upgrade the current system of support. They make sure Ohio's children, often the most vulnerable, are supported.

An assessment of the old system, House Bill 70, shows less than effective outcomes. Youngstown and East Cleveland earned an F on their respective report cards again this year. The community of Lorain, while improving their letter grade, continues to endure situations that are far less than desirable.

By supporting school districts from the onset of the process, the system of support has been updated. Over the duration of the six year period, school districts should see improvement as a result of increased support. If improvement is not observed, the system of House Bill 154 must, again, be assessed, updated, and upgraded.

Thank you for your attention to the incredibly important issue of education. I am happy to answer any questions you have at this time.

Respectfully submitted,



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