



Interested Party Testimony on Sub. HB 154

Senate Education Committee

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Chairwoman Lehner, Vice Chair Terhar, Ranking Member Fedor and members of the Senate Education Committee.

My name is Claudia Herrold and I am senior vice president at Philanthropy Ohio, the statewide association whose mission is to lead and equip Ohio philanthropy to be more effective, powerful change agents in their communities. Philanthropy Ohio and its members have engaged deeply in education policy reform for the past dozen years. Ohio's private funders are big supporters of education in Ohio, seeking to improve educational opportunities and outcomes for our earliest learners as well as for those in post-secondary activities, whether career-tech, two-year or four-year colleges and universities.

Additionally, 3 of our members have served on academic distress commissions in Lorain and Youngstown, bringing first-hand experience and insights to our discussions about improving student outcomes. We welcome this opportunity to provide our thoughts on Sub HB 154 and applaud you for your commitment and sense of urgency: we believe, as do you, that all Ohio children, regardless of where they live, deserve access to high-performing schools that can set them on the path to future prosperity and well-being.

We are happy to see the bill provides funding for root cause analyses that go beyond the walls of a school building or district. The root cause analysis process seeks to discover highest-level causal factors, which contributes greatly to the development of a responsible plan. Why are schools failing? Answering that question requires a deeper examination of whether it is due to a flawed school process or if deeper, causal factors need explored and addressed.

We suspect that in many cases, schools will be only one key part of a comprehensive root cause analysis, bigger system and plan of what must be implemented and supported to drive real change. We firmly believe that such analyses should take into account the community conditions that play a significant role in a student's – and school's – performance. It is clear that the low-performing districts and schools have similar community-level factors – such as high poverty and trauma rates, poor health, unstable housing, food insecurity – all of which impact student performance.

And, the state has a significant role and responsibility to support addressing any community-level factors that are identified in a root cause analysis and included in a school improvement plan. We also believe



that such an analysis should be done by recognized, independent experts with a track record of success in helping schools and districts improve outcomes.

Critical to the success of this effort are three other items that are addressed in Sub HB 154:

First, we applaud the recognition of the importance of local control, as evidenced by the composition of the School Improvement Committee (SIC). However, given our belief in the need to look beyond school walls to determine – and address – community-level factors in any root cause analysis, we believe that the composition of the SIC as proposed limits the ability to effectively develop and implement plans that will result in real change. For instance, if a root cause analysis determines that substance abuse is a factor in low-performance, community organizations – with their significant expertise – will be needed in developing and implementing strategies that will address these non-education needs that impact education. Accordingly, we would suggest two things: that the legislation not limit the composition to educators and that it be flexible enough that local leaders can identify those in the community – whether they be parents or nonprofit, higher education or philanthropic leaders – who can best serve on the SIC.

Second, we would encourage you to *require* that improvement plans be developed on evidence-based practice, not merely be permissive.

And, on a related note, we encourage you to *require* – rather than permit – that school improvement plans have measurable outcomes that must be reported; how else can an SIC be accountable for its actions?

In conclusion, we emphasize that improving school outcomes is a complex undertaking that defies a cookie cutter, one-size-fits-all solution. Despite common community-level factors, each district or school that is underperforming needs its own strategies and partners who coordinate and align together – for the good of the students.

Thank you for this opportunity and please know that Philanthropy Ohio and its members stand ready to be strong partners with you and in their local communities.