



**Testimony for House Bill 170**

**State Representative Tracy Richardson, District 86**

**House Finance Committee**

**April 13th, 2021**

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Good morning Chair Oelslager, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Crawley and members of the House Finance Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 170. This bill provides assistance to schools and other entities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. House Bill 170 provides approximately \$857 million in additional federal funding to Ohio's public, private and vocational schools for COVID-19 pandemic-related expenses.

This legislation is required to ensure that the Ohio Department of Education receives the necessary appropriation authority to pass-through the federal dollars provided by both the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act of March 2020 and also the Consolidated Appropriations Act of December 2020.

Last year, the Ohio Controlling Board appropriated federal COVID-19 response dollars. Currently, we are unable to utilize the Controlling Board to appropriate these funds for Fiscal Year 2021. Specifically, we have already met the \$180 million funding request limit identified in the Ohio Revised Code.

To support the request for appropriations contained in HB 170, I will now summarize the recent history of federal funding for education in Ohio. The CARES ACT provided \$489.2 million in Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER I) funding to Ohio. Ten percent remained with the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) for state purposes and about \$40 million went to private schools for equitable services. The remainder of ESSER I dollars are carried forward from FY 20 to FY 21 in this bill. The CARES Act also provided \$105 million in Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER I) funding which was used to fund County Boards of Developmental Disabilities, Educational Service Centers (ESC), and Joint Vocational School Districts (JVSD) since these entities did not receive ESSER I dollars. In December 2020, the Consolidated Appropriations Act provided \$1.991 billion in ESSER II funding. Ten percent of this funding will remain at ODE for state purposes.

HB 170 appropriates \$683 million. \$400 million of the total is ESSER II funds and about \$280 million is carried forward ESSER I funds. The bill also appropriates \$154.9 Million in GEER II funds from the Consolidated Appropriations Act for emergency assistance to non-public schools. Finally, it appropriates \$19 million of the remaining \$25 million GEER I balance from the CARES Act.

There is an additional appropriation authority for FY 22 and FY 23 in HB 110, the main operating budget, to enable drawdown of remaining ESSER II and GEER II funds.

In closing, the appropriations in this legislation come from existing funds including ESSER I, ESSER II, GEER I, and GEER II (private portion). The use of these dollars has already been determined by the federal government, except for the 10% of ESSER funds that remain with the Ohio Department of Education. While these dollars have been awarded and their allocation decided by the federal government, it is the Ohio Legislature's responsibility to appropriate them so they can be used to support Ohio schools.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 170.