



The OEA will lead the way for continuous improvement of public education while advocating for members and the learners they serve.

OHIO EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

May 25, 2021

Ohio Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee

SB 165 – Interested Party Testimony

Good afternoon Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee. My name is Scott DiMauro and I am president of the Ohio Education Association. Thank you for this opportunity to provide Interested Party testimony regarding SB 165.

OEA appreciates the work of the sponsor and co-sponsor in developing this legislation. SB 165 establishes a process by which a school district subject to the state takeover law (the bill only applies to Lorain City Schools at this time) would be returned to local control while implementing an academic improvement plan approved by the state. As OEA understands the bill, the provisions of the state takeover law would not apply to the district during implementation of the improvement plan. The district would be fully released from state takeover status if a majority of academic objectives in the improvement plan are met after three years. The district would have additional opportunities to meet a majority of academic objectives after a fourth or fifth year, if necessary. If the district does not meet a majority of academic objectives after five years, the district would return to the control of the academic distress commission (ADC) and CEO.

OEA continues to call for the full repeal of the failed state takeover law as the best course of action to support students in Lorain, Youngstown, and East Cleveland. OEA also recognizes that SB 165 moves in the right direction by prioritizing the return of local control to those closest to the children and providing a coherent pathway out of the harm caused to these districts by state takeovers. As such, OEA asks that SB 165 also be applied to Youngstown and East Cleveland city schools. All three school districts and their communities have suffered enough and each deserves equal opportunity to regain local control on behalf of their students.

The state takeover law has been a harmful experiment for students, educators, and the broader communities in Lorain, Youngstown, and East Cleveland. Handing near unilateral control to an unaccountable CEO has proven to be a recipe for chaos, division, and neglect. This does not help students. The Ohio General Assembly has demonstrated recognition that state takeovers do not work by establishing a moratorium on new state takeovers. The state budget bill now under consideration would extend the current moratorium on state takeovers for another two school years.

There is consensus that stripping elected school boards of oversight authority, dismissing the leadership of local superintendents, sidelining the voices of educators, and disenfranchising district



voters is not a legitimate strategy for supporting students. The distractions and dysfunction caused by state takeovers have only increased the difficulty of developing comprehensive supports that help students overcome barriers to learning caused by poverty.

It is time to turn the page on state takeovers. SB 165 does not solve the state takeover problem, but it creates a process that hopefully provides a legitimate pathway out of the problem. Including all three districts in state takeover status would enhance the bill as a worthy step in the right direction for all stakeholders, especially students.

Thank you. I am available for any questions you may have.