



**Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee
Senate Bill 165 Testimony
Ohio School Boards Association
Buckeye Association of School Administrators
Ohio Association of School Business Officials
May 25, 2021**

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Fedor and members of the Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today regarding Senate Bill (HB) 165. I am Nicole Piscitani with the Ohio School Boards Association. Joining me today for this testimony and in answering your questions are Kevin Miller with the Buckeye Association of School Administrators and Katie Johnson representing the Ohio Association of School Business Officials. Our organizations represent public school district boards of education, superintendents, treasurers/CFOs, business managers, and other school business officials from around the state. We are testifying today in support of SB 165.

We could stand before you all day and talk about the negative consequences of academic distress commissions and the damage that has occurred in the communities of East Cleveland, Lorain and Youngstown. The last five years have shown that the current academic distress commission law is not helpful in improving outcomes for students.

Our organizations believe in the need for change: the need to restore the community's representation through their locally elected boards and the need to improve opportunities and outcomes for students attending these districts. We appreciate that SB 165 establishes a process and creates a pathway for Lorain City Schools to be relieved of academic distress commission oversight. The bill allows the district's board of education to work with stakeholders, the district's academic distress commission and chief executive officer to develop and submit an academic improvement plan that will include strategies and benchmarks to improve student outcomes.

We appreciate that SB 165 allows the district's board of education to reassume all powers given to them under the law while the district is implementing the approved improvement plan. The cornerstone of public education in Ohio is locally elected boards of education that exercise local control in establishing policy and governance of their public schools while remaining accountable to the citizens who elected them.

Ohio currently has three academic distress commissions: East Cleveland, Lorain and Youngstown. **We request that you amend SB 165 to provide the same pathway for the East Cleveland City School District and the Youngstown City School District as well.**

Thank you for your time and attention. We would be happy to answer any questions you might have at this time.