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Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee
Senate Bill 200—Sponsor Testimony
Tuesday, September 21, 2021

Thank you Vice Chair Blessing and members of the Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee for allowing Ranking Member Fedor and I to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 200. This bill would permit students who were enrolled in 12th grade during the 2020-2021 school year to re-enroll in that grade this year.

The language in this legislation would enact, in temporary law, provisions that allow last year's graduating class to essentially repeat their senior year, if a student chose to do so. Obviously, the current academic year is well underway, but it is my belief that this bill and the issues surrounding it merit this committee's attention and further discussion.

Earlier this spring, we were approached by a high school student from Southern Ohio who shared some concerns he had with the way his education and his instruction had been conducted during the last school year. He struggled with online learning, as so many of our students did. His academics suffered, and his overall wellbeing declined. It was refreshing and inspiring to see a young person taking part in the democratic process by advocating for their own education and we wanted to be responsive.

This student's case does not appear to be unique, either. Preliminary data has shown there has been a significant interruption in academic achievement as a result of the pandemic. As the members of this committee know, the full impact of this pandemic extends well beyond academics. Young people lost an entire year during the most formative part of their lives. Social events, athletic tournaments, field trips, and everyday life were put on pause for so long that some students, particularly the class of 2020, will never have the opportunity to make them up.

Obviously, the 2020-2021 school year was very difficult for everyone in schools across Ohio: students, teachers, and faculty. They were thrown into unfamiliar modes of instruction and had to make do with the best that was available in a bad situation. This legislation was introduced with the hope that we could have meaningful discussion on the wider scope that interruptions in regular in-person instruction had on our students, and begin working towards remediation.

At this time, we would be happy to answer any questions you may have.