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## Committees

Ways & Means, *Chairman*  
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Finance  
Transportation

Chairman Brenner, Ranking Member Fedor, and Members of the Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 229. This bill is intended to give our schools necessary flexibility as they navigate the school year in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic.

Ohio's schools have been working diligently to keep their students safe and healthy. They have adapted to changing guidelines and continue to prioritize safety. This year, districts had the option to notify ODE before the start of the school year if they intended to operate using a blended learning model. A blended learning option allows students to continue their studies if they are at home in quarantine. In order to have a blended learning model, schools must teach students in-person for a majority of the year, but allows some flexibility for times that is not possible.

Unfortunately there have already been many COVID-19 positive cases and exposures in classrooms this year, leading schools to send many students across the state home to quarantine for days at a time. To help schools keep children safe while still ensuring their education continues, SB 229 provides an extension to April 30, 2022 for a school to notify ODE of its intent to operate a blended learning model for this school year. In addition to this deadline extension, SB 229 states that schools and districts that opt for blended learning this year must follow the established requirements for operating a blended learning model in the Revised Code and do the following:

- Provide internet access and devices necessary to access online content
- Monitor and assess student achievement and progress
- Report the number and duration of students participating in a blended learning environment

Senate Bill 229 also ensures that community school funding will not be reduced for taking advantage of the blended learning option. We do not want to put schools in an unfair situation where taking measures to ensure health will hurt them financially.

Finally, SB 229 allows special education students and students receiving the Jon Peterson Special Needs Scholarship or Autism Scholarship to receive care and instruction remotely from a licensed provider upon a parent or guardians request. This is modeled on a previous provision enacted by the General Assembly in HB 164 for the last school year.

The provisions in this bill are meant to make an already challenging school year just a bit easier for districts to educate and meet the needs of their students. Work continues on this bill, and I hope to share a sub-bill with the members of this committee in the next few days that provides some tweaks to the language before you based on feedback we are receiving from stakeholders and the Department of Education. Thank you for your consideration of Senate Bill 229. I am happy to answer any questions from the committee.