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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 276. This bill will allow school teachers in Ohio to use their accrued sick leave as parental leave.

Currently, there are inconsistencies across the state regarding parental leave. While many school districts do allow the usage of sick time for parental leave, some do not or only allow a limited amount of sick leave to be used for this purpose. SB 276 would require all boards of education in Ohio to allow employees to use up to 480 hours, or 12 weeks, of their unused sick leave for parental leave. It is well documented that these first months after birth are a critical developmental period for infants, and providing time for parents to bond with their baby is crucial. The bill also permits this leave to be used by parents of a newly adopted child, as well as by parents in the tragic case of a stillbirth. Current law addresses the use of sick leave for pregnancy, but does not clarify if it can be used after a birth or adoption. SB 276 will codify that this is permissible.

To be clear, this parental leave would not be any additional hours given to employees; this leave is from their own sick time that they have already accrued. Additionally, this bill does not invalidate any current employment contracts or collective bargaining agreements. SB 276 allows Ohio's teachers, the ones we trust to watch and support our own kids, to spend precious time with their own children.

Thank you for your consideration of Senate Bill 276. I am happy to answer any questions from the committee.