**Senate Education Committee**

**Proponent Testimony on SB216**

**The Ohio Public School Deregulation Bill**

**November 8, 2017**

Good morning Chairman Lehner, Vice Chairman Huffman, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the committee.

My name is **Chris Pfister**, and I am the superintendent of the **Waynesfield-Goshen** (W-G) School District in Auglaize County.

W-G is a center of the community, small rural district, consisting of 63 square miles in eastern Auglaize County (12 miles southeast of Lima, Ohio) serving 535 students Pre-K-12.

I greatly appreciate the opportunity to speak to you today regarding Senate Bill (SB) 216.

SB216 is a start to help change law, rule, or regulation that adds little value, takes a significant amount of time and money, and pulls focus away from mission: teaching and student learning.

To highlight a few of the problems that we face in our district:

**Teacher Licensure and Aide Permits**

**Full-Time Teacher Licensure**

I want the best teacher teaching the children. By code we have not been able to assign the most qualified teacher to teach the children. I am not asking to hire anyone off the street. Under code I already have the authority to hire a much less qualified person, a sub. I am asking for the authority to place an effective, proven licensed teacher working in my district for a class period or two outside of their license grade band or subject area. A few recent examples:

* Exemplary experienced Spanish teacher, licensed 7-12, full teaching load, agrees to do a 6th grade, one semester, exploration of the Spanish Language and Culture, at the request of parents and at no cost. Has to apply for a supplemental and enter college.
* 4-9 licensed science teacher, teaching STEM, CCP manufacturing process with Rhodes State, PLTW Pre-Engineering, Robotics, CAD/CAM, cannot teach a 10th grader. Asked for the 12 hour STEM license for grades 10-12; denied because he currently holds a license at grades 4-9, only a person with no license, with no teaching experience qualifies. This teacher applied for the supplemental and enrolled in coursework that will cost us $6,000 over two years.
* 29 year, K-8 licensed English teacher, successful at 8th grade, cannot teach a ninth grader

**Long-term and Short-term Substitute Teachers**

The problem was a long term substitute could not teach longer than 5 days without a bachelor’s degree in the subject. Since it is very rare to find such sub, the sub was pulled out every five days, disrupting the educational process for the children. Last week the department changed the administrative rule to 60 days, disrupting the educational process less often; very helpful, we appreciate the change, but contend it would be better to not disrupt the educational process at all.

**Aide Permit**

The problem is the permit is meaningless and the consequence of not having a permit is an audit finding for recovery of all money paid to the aide, out of the treasurer’s pocket, or they never work again (district is covered by the bond). To receive an aide permit a person needs to be a HS Graduate and not convicted of a felony. Since all districts require BCI/FBI checks for all new hires and record their employment in Staff EMIS, our recommendation is that when the department receives the BCI report they automatically issue the permit.

**Third Grade Reading Test/Third Grade Reading Guarantee**

Testing third grade students on-line on the computer is developmentally inappropriate and does not accurately assess our children’s ability to read and write. The high stakes third grade English Language Arts test, covering many standards of literacy reading, informational reading, and writing, in a two day, high pressure time compressed setting is testing a young child’s ability to navigate the technology, not their ability to read and write. I can give many examples; for one, when a young boy couldn’t get his drop down menu to work he melted down and panicked, couldn’t get back under control, and ultimately did not get enough points to be proficient (670 of 700) on the first test. Before the second test I told my El principal to have him write his paragraphs out and then type it in (he was a “B” student that we knew could read and write), he said just not enough time. This young smallish boy ended up sitting in my principal’s office crying for 20 minutes because he can’t be with his classmates the next year. Yet we know he can read and write. We recommend giving districts the choice of paper tests or on-line tests grades 3-5. We understand it is easier to have all tests on-line, but we would prefer a much more accurate assessment of our children’s ability to read and write.

We have no problem with on-line tests for grades 6-12 after our students have learned keyboarding (we teach at sixth grade when all students get their 1:1 Chromebook) and are more proficient at navigating the computer.

Interestingly, not long ago one of my two third grade teachers shared that her HS son just finished a grueling four hour ACT test, all paper and pencil, and then they and gave our little third graders a computer test that they have trouble navigating.

**In Closing:**

SB216 is just a start; there are many more issues that need to be addressed. We sincerely want to be helpful. No blame, solutions. So we can operate more efficiently, effectively, and produce meaningful results. Daily I receive the next assignment to do or a report to complete; or the most recent change in a rule that we will have to implement. It all takes time and money. Individually each may sound good, yet many are not necessary. When we accumulate so many tasks that are not directly related to our purpose we have lost sight of the important. We are pulling focus from core mission (educating children). We could be so much more effective if we could keep the focus on student learning.

We would greatly appreciate your support of SB216.

**Thank you very much for your time and for the opportunity to offer brief remarks on issues important to our district.**