SB 34 – Proponent Testimony

Offered by Mike Caputo

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Chairman Lehner, Vice-Chairman Huffman, Ranking Member Sykes and Members of the Senate Education Committee, my name is Mike Caputo and I am here to offer proponent testimony on Senate Bill 34.

For six years I served as a Member of the Bay Village Board of Education, including a two year term during which my colleagues selected me to serve as Board President. While school boards are tasked to address a wide-ranging litany of policies, one that continually receives tremendous interest is the school calendar.

As you know, current law requires a school board to post a draft calendar and hold a public hearing on the proposed calendar prior to adopting that resolution. As part of our process in Bay Village, one of the constant concerns that was expressed to me by the community was the concern about the length of the school year.

I often heard from parents who couldn’t understand why the school year, which perhaps began after Labor Day and ended the first week of June when they were in school, had gained nearly three weeks since that time.

While there are many reasons for this, state testing cannot be overlooked as a significant factor. I’d be remiss if I didn’t say that one of the factors that school boards consider when setting a calendar are state testing dates. Districts, understandably, seek ways to maximize instructional time leading up to those tests. I am hopeful that as this discussion continues, consideration will be given to further aligning state testing dates in a manner that maximizes educational enhancement.

I know that no one wants to reduce the educational capacity for our kids. Rather, I believe that Senate Bill 34 will force school boards across Ohio to re-examine how a school calendar is set. Specifically, the acceptance of starting school prior to Labor Day has offered built-in flexibility for schools to offer additional days off, additional in-service days and extended breaks, which may not be in the best educational interest of the student.

This year, my home district has 27 days off between our first day of school and our last day of school. Forget for a moment the challenge that a schedule like this presents for child care purposes, but you have to ask yourself, “Does that many breaks in between instructional days foster the ideal learning environment?” I believe that SB 34 will force the type of holistic review of a school calendar, which is why I am here today offering this testimony.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 34. I am happy to answer any questions from the committee.