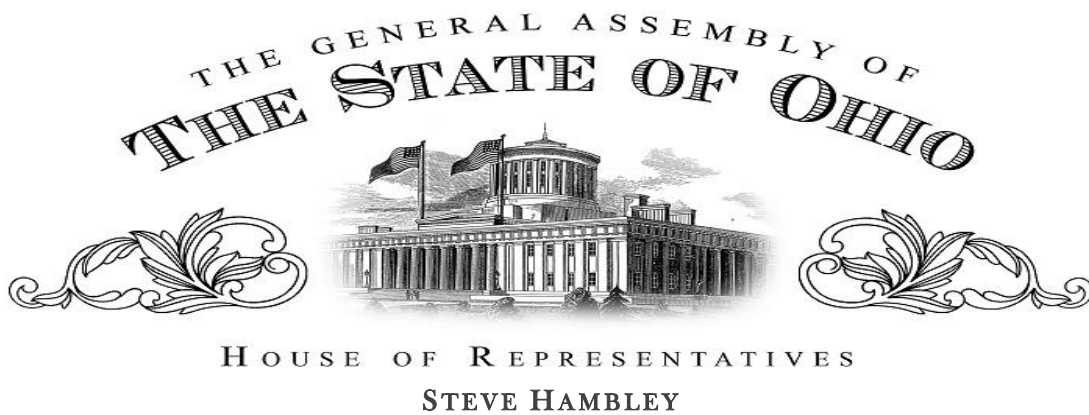


Chair Lehner, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for allowing me to present House Bill 21 for consideration. House Bill 21 would update the Ohio Revised Code requiring community schools to keep adequate records of where their enrollees reside. This legislation provides a straightforward solution to a problem that many local school districts are facing.

Currently under Ohio law, the responsibility for verifying the residency of a community school enrollee is the duty of public school districts. In summary, the law says the public school district in which a student resides is responsible for doing a monthly review of a community school student's entitlement to attend school in that district. Only if the public district determines that a child does not reside in the district and notifies the community school is the community school obligated to determine where the child has moved.

The origin of House Bill 21 comes from my local public schools. During one of my regular meetings with superintendents in my county, they brought forth the problem at hand. The issue for them was this: school districts sometimes never meet students enrolled in community schools, especially if they are enrolled in an on-line web based school. They are rarely, if ever, in contact with the families, and have no concrete way of knowing that the child still lives within the boundaries of the school district. Without this physical contact, the school district has no way of knowing if a student changes their residency. Families and students moving once or multiple times throughout a school year make it difficult and impractical for public school districts to determine that a child does not reside in the district and thereby notify the community school, as the current law requires.

House Bill 21 takes rudimentary, effective steps to fix this problem. First, it requires the governing authority of the community school to *verify* the residency of each student upon enrollment, and on an annual basis. This changes the obligation from the public schools to community schools on the foundation that each school should only be responsible for verifying the residency of the students they serve. We strengthen this language by ensuring that the public district in which the student resides may review this determination.



Second, House Bill 21 requires community schools to *review* the residency records of their students monthly. This language was inserted in the bill to ensure that *if* a community school learns of a change in residency of one of their students, that record is updated on a monthly basis. This strengthens the accuracy of residency records month-to-month.

Third, for the *initial* and *annual* verifications of student residency, House Bill 21 now requires a community school to adopt two separate policies that prescribe the number of documents required to verify a student's residency. For the *initial* verification, community schools are bound to the same choice of documents that public school districts are bound to. We purposely broadened the number of documents for the *annual* verification, so that this requirement would not be too onerous for the community school to complete.

Finally, House Bill 21 adds two mandatory provisions to the contract between a sponsor and the governing authority of a community school. First, a provision requiring the governing authority to adopt a student residence and address verification policy. This policy further strengthens and holds the sponsor equally accountable for the residency verification changes in the bill. Second, House Bill 21 adds a provision that requires a student's parent to notify a community school when the student's primary residence changes. This requirement will ensure that a parent knows that it is their duty to inform a school when their child moves. This will ensure more timely and accurate updating of records.

In conclusion, House Bill 21 does not change the flagging process that is current law. Rather, House Bill 21 strengthens it. By ensuring accurate residency records, we can better ensure that our school districts are not paying for students who do not live in their districts, and guarantee that the funding going to community schools is coming from the correct accounts. Further, by ensuring timely updating of records, the burden of flags – especially fatal flags – will be reduced for the community schools.

House Bill 21 is a win for public education. It is supported by Auditor of State Dave Yost, Ohio Education Association, Buckeye Association of School Administrators, Ohio Association of School Business Officials, Ohio School Boards Association, and had zero opponents when passed unanimously out of the House, and the House Education and Career Readiness Committee.