



EDUCATION
COMMITTEE

Witness Form

Today's Date 2-6-18

Name: Brenda Boeke Kay Schmiesing

Address: 50 E 7th Street
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Organization Representing: Minster Schools

Testifying on Bill Number: SB 216

Testimony: Verbal Written Both

Testifying As: Proponent Opponent Interested Party

Are you a Registered Lobbyist? Yes No

Special Requests: _____



Minster Local Schools

Mission: Challenging Today's Students to Become Tomorrow's Leaders

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Proponent Testimony for SB 216

Dear Chairperson Lehner, Vice-Chair Huffman and members of the Ohio Senate Education Committee.

My name is Brenda Boeke and I am Superintendent of the Minster Local School District in Auglaize County. I would like to thank Sen. Huffman for his work on this bill and to the committee for proceeding with hearings.

I am writing to express my support of eliminating excused absences from the current mandates of HB410. Just this week we have received two communications from parents regarding our required notification of meeting the triggering threshold. The first from a high school parent *"I got a letter about excessive absences for _____ this week she was so sick she practically had pneumonia when they're sick they're sick they cannot control that and I never want to see a letter like that again in my mail that's just plain ridiculous you cannot control when you're sick I can't believe your school system would send out letters like that."* The second came from an elementary parent that is too long to include in this testimony but I will include the closing paragraph *"As education and attendance are important we agree that measures need to be in place to deal with genuine truancy issues, but it is also our opinion that these issues are matters that are best determined by the individual schools on a case-by-case basis. ____ is an excellent student, as evidenced by her grades and teachers' comments. We have not seen a negligible impact due to her attendance; her make-up work is always completed with little to no incident, and we have had NO negative feed-back from her teachers on this matter. This is not to say that missing classes does not have an impact, but only that hers is not to an extent that is causing issues keeping up in class. Medical appointments are what they are going to be, and we will make every reasonable effort to avoid her missing class. That said, our child's health will come first. She does not have a truancy issue, nor is she being grossly affected by these, mostly, medically verified absences. Beyond these "violations" _____, nor we her parents, have given the school or the state any reason to believe there is a truancy, or any other issue, that requires any type of intervention such as stated in the mandate."*

To end our testimony, I am including the email our school nurse sent to Senator Lehner and Representative Brenner this week asking for assistance with the burden of dealing with excused absences. Please consider her suggestions for moving ahead in a responsible manner.

Good afternoon, I am one of the school nurses at the Minster Local Schools in Auglaize County. I also take care of the attendance. We combined this duty with our position because it gives us a feel for the illnesses and injuries in the school, and the truancy. We also have opportunities to talk to parents quite frequently about their child absences. I am emailing about my concerns of HB410. I understand and agree that good attendance correlates with maximizing a child's education. I have been faithfully sending out letters notifying parents of the child's excessive absences as HB410 mandates.

We are lucky to have a very good school system. I have no problem using this if a child is unexcused, tardy or even excessively absent due to minor reasons. I am having a very difficult time sending them to parents whose children have been absent due to pneumonia, influenza, or mono, or students that need to have a surgical operation as a tonsillectomy, knee or shoulder surgery as a few examples. These parents have sent in doctor's notes, have contacted teachers, picked up homework etc. They are already worried about their children missing so much school. Also a problem is we are sending them guidelines given by the ODH and CDC asking them, if ill, to stay out of school until fever free for 24 hours. Very confusing to them! I, in my professional opinion and more than ten years' experience doing school nursing/attendance, am asking if we must have the HB410, that it would be for unexcused absences only. If they must include the excused absences then I ask that absences that are covered by a doctor's note be disregarded. This would help get to the kids that the HB410 was meant to reach. Please take this into consideration. Please get to the families that need further interventions and not put unnecessary fears and burdens on the families that have unforeseen situations arise. Thank you for your understanding

Kay Schmiesing RN, BSN

If you are in need of additional information, please feel free to contact me at 419-628-3397 or Brenda.boeke@minsterschools.org.

Sincerely,
Brenda Boeke