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Higher Education— *Ranking Member*
Primary & Secondary Education
Economic & Workforce Development
Broadcast Educational Media Commission
Joint Legislative Committee on E-School Funding

State Representative Catherine D. Ingram

Sponsor Testimony – House Bill 597
Civil Justice Committee
December 03, 2020

Chairman Hambley, Vice Chair Patton, Ranking Member Brown and all other members of the House Civil Justice Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 597.

House Bill 597 is an emergency measure that will halt the collection of student debt and medical debt owed to state institutions of higher education and any hospitals operated by those institutions. This bill will also freeze the accrual of interest and collection of fees on all outstanding debt owed to the above entities.

Current Law states that when any amount is due to the state the officer, employee or agent responsible for administering the law under which the money is due must immediately move to collect the amount owed and if not paid within 45 days is certified to the Attorney General.

It is Ohio's promise to help the most vulnerable and provide assistance for low income individuals and individuals in extreme need. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, students and families are faced with tough economic decisions. Unemployment is at an all-time high and the ability to afford everyday items is growing harder and harder. 45 days is simply not enough time to pay back debts owed when many are in economic distress. Students and families are having to make tough decisions in

32nd Ohio House District

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Villages at Roll Hill | Walnut Hills | West End | Westwood

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these difficult times and we should not be making this tougher. Once these debts are certified to the AG's office they may decide to send them to a third party collector, where fees and interest is added making paying off the debt nearly impossible.

I will now turn it over to my colleague Representative Miranda.