State Senator Michael Rulli
Ohio's 33rd Senate District

State Senator Stephanie Kunze
Ohio's 16th Senate District

Senate Bill 4
Sponsor Testimony
House Primary and Secondary Education Committee
May 23, 2019

Chairman Oelslager, Vice-Chair Scherer, Ranking Member Cera and members of the House Finance Committee. We are pleased to sponsor Senate Bill 4 which, if enacted into law, would dramatically improve educational infrastructure in our state.

Senator Kunze and I are committed to ensuring that all Ohio school children have the opportunity to attend a high quality public school. In addition to being concerned, involved parents of students who attend or graduated from public school, we have both been active in the public school system – I served as the president of the Leetonia School Board and Senator Kunze worked in an elementary school in Hilliard. People make the difference in education from excellent teachers to involved parents to motivated students to engaged school leaders, but having a building that is conducive to learning is also very important.

A June 1996 federal General Accounting Office survey ranked Ohio last for its support of school facilities. Since creation of the Ohio School Facilities Commission (now called the Ohio Facilities Construction Commission, OFCC) in 1997, more than $12.1 billion in state funds have been invested to renovate and construct safe school buildings across Ohio. Priority has been given to the lowest wealth schools and those with exceptional needs. 284 of Ohio's school districts have had all of their schools updated or built in partnership with OFCC. An additional 116 districts have had their plans fully or partially funded. 1,202 school buildings have been fully renovated or constructed.

This investment has helped the economies of local communities. During the recession when private construction was lagging, Ohio school projects were still moving forward and people were working.

Due to the improved economy and success of the program, all of the money provided in the last capital bill has been committed or spent because more districts have passed their local shares and want to participate. Without new funding now, schools will need to wait longer to receive state assistance for any new projects.

Senate Bill 4 allocates $100 million in new money that will be bonded to enable the state to partner with more schools on the equity list that want to participate and move forward with projects. While it is my understanding that bond projects usually are included in the capital bill which will occur next year, this legislation seeks to add additional money in the school facilities construction fund above what may be included in the next capital budget. As President Obhof said during the Senate press conference that announced Senate Bill 4 as a priority during this general assembly, "Let's get it sooner rather than later, so we can help schools that are next in line... instead of arbitrarily waiting 18 months."

While in the Senate, Senate Bill 4 received proponent testimony from the Buckeye Association of School Administrators; South-Western City School District; Shelby City School District; Logan Elm Local School District; Green Local School District; Warrensville Heights City School District and the East Clinton Local School District. It received no opposition testimony.

Senate Bill 4 received unanimous, bipartisan support in the Ohio Senate as it was reported from the Senate Finance committee 11-0 and from the Ohio Senate 31-0. Twenty-three of our colleagues have joined us as co-sponsors on this critical measure.

In the Ohio House of Representatives Primary and Secondary Education committee, the measure was reported from committee 14-0, again, receiving no opposition testimony. Six of your colleagues have signed onto this measure as co-sponsors.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear today in support of this bill, which will help a multitude of students and educators throughout our state.

We would be glad to answer any questions from the committee.