

Zanesville

205 N. 7th Street
Zanesville, Ohio 43701
P: 740-453-4518
F: 740-455-6702

New Lexington

1605 Airport Road
New Lexington, Ohio 43764
P: 740-342-3502
F: 740-342-1961

www.mvesc.org

Co-Chair Oelslager, Co-Chair Callender, Vice Chair Scherer and Ranking Member Cera, my name is Lori Snyder-Lowe and I serve the staff and students of 18 districts in Southeast Ohio. As a new educational service center (ESC) superintendent, I have spent the past year learning about ESC funding and operations. Prior to becoming an ESC superintendent, I had the privilege of serving the staff and students of Morgan Local School District, a high poverty, low income, large geographic district in southeast Ohio. My experience as a school district superintendent (in terms of working to provide services to students with very little funding) did not prepare me for the enormous challenge of supporting districts without the basic operating funds needed to “get by”. I have been truly amazed about the lack of funding being given to ESCs to provide the vital services needed by our districts.

As you may know, ESC’s provide essential services to districts including:

- Working with ODE to provide the needed professional development to teachers including training on things such as the differentiation, Common Core, OTES, OPES, SLOs, SGMs, etc.
- Supporting implementation of ODE/legislative/USDOE programs such as Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Business Advisory Councils, ODE Strategic Plan, school improvement supports, etc.
- Providing special education staffing, training and supports
- Providing attendance/truancy supports
- Providing grant partnership/grant writing supports
- Providing behavior intervention and mental health services
- Operating alternative schools, juvenile detention facilities, after school programs, summer enrichment programs
- Providing remote learning supports and training for staff and students
- Providing group purchasing collaboration
- And many more!

With all these outstanding supports, programs and services, ESCs save districts massive amounts of money. In fact, our ability to lower costs for districts has resulted in a 34% annual savings for our districts based on a five year average.

From a historical perspective, when ESC’s were created, they were funded through federal Medicaid funds, through state funds on a per pupil subsidy, with preschool special education and categorical units (including vocational education, special education, gifted education, child

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studies, OT, PT, speech and hearing, etc.), and with local funds including a local \$6.50 per pupil deduction, supervisory unit funding, extended service and fee for service contracts. We also received funding from local boards of county commissioners for facilities support and facilities maintenance.

In addition, in 1995 ESCs, which merged to offer greater efficiency and economy, were funded by the state at 1% of the state's per pupil subsidy for each student with the understanding that the 1% would become the normal per pupil support from Ohio in succeeding budgets. That has never happened!

Now in 2020, we do not receive any direct federal funding and no facilities funding from county boards of commissioners and only receive direct state funding for gifted education beyond what we receive in the per pupil operating subsidy. In addition, our local funds have been cut to only the local deduct of \$6.50 per pupil and fee for service contracts. In fact, since 2008, our ESC funding has been reduced by 23%, while costs to operate have increased significantly.

To resolve this extreme depletion of funding, OESCA has undergone an extensive research project to provide you with the evidence you need to fund ESC's at their real cost. That cost is \$42.67 per student served (unfortunately, right now we only receive \$26 per student). This level of funding would provide us with the ability to meet the urgent needs of our districts and the statutorily mandated services in place for ESC's.

Again, as a new ESC superintendent, I really had no idea that ESC's were not funded to provide the most basic of services needed for the districts they serve. I cannot stress enough the importance of ESC supports to districts and the need for ESC's to be funded in order to meet the needs of the staff and students they serve and to be the deployment arm for the Ohio Department of Education around the rollout of statewide technical assistance and support.

Mr. Chair, thank you for this opportunity to offer my testimony, and I would be happy to address questions from the committee at the pleasure of the chair.