

Chairwoman Lehner, Vice Chair Terhar, Ranking Member Below and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for allowing me to share my testimony on how HB70 has impacted myself and students.

My name is Sandra Peloquin and I am an English Language teacher and I just completed my 25th year of teaching. I absolutely love the population that I am totally blessed to work with. The majority of my English Learner students come from Puerto Rico and are United States Citizens. After Hurricane Maria caused so much damage on The Island, many more students arrived in Lorain. They came after witnessing so much destruction and the loss of their homes, jobs and day to day resources such as clean water. They more than likely came without school records as those they had at their homes were destroyed along with their schools. The trauma of going to school in a new country, culture and language is challenging enough but add the trauma of the Hurricane my students experienced moved this trauma to a whole new level.

In previous years Lorain Schools had been making great strides to involve the Spanish speaking population into the schools. The schools worked to build a relationship with the social service agency in Lorain called El Centro. Instead of having parent teacher conferences at the schools we first tried the local Spanish speaking church and then had them at El Centro. El Centro not only provided us a space but the use of translators to help the general education teachers with conferences. The schools and El Centro also partnered to implement a program called Padres Comprometidos. Padres Comprometidos worked to help parents know what to ask and how to become involved in their children's education. Dan Falk, a recently dismissed teacher helped and advocated with this program. Relationships were strengthened with this program. Offices had staff that could speak Spanish to help parents who didn't speak English. Since HB70 two of the elementary schools that service the EL population do not have anyone who speaks Spanish in the office. The answer to this has been to call down one of the Spanish speaking paraprofessionals to translate. That means student time is lost. The other alternative has been to have the parents wait while a call is put through to find a translator somewhere in the district.

Under the new administration one of our bilingual administrators was moved from an EL building to be a dean at a building that doesn't service ELs. Meetings such as town halls or ADC meetings rarely offer translating services. Previously meetings had been held in areas around the city where there would be translation services. This no longer happens. In fact one school tried to take away art and gym from EL students to concentrate on English. This is a clear violation of the students' rights but nonetheless was a big battle. There was no thought or data behind such a rash decision other than anyone labeled EL needed this. At the last hour it was rescinded but only grudgingly and not for the best interest of the students. This is a major reason my colleague has been let go because he advocated for the students, and I might add saving the district a law suit. Additionally, I work with Dan not only in transitioning EL students to the high school where I work but also working with the families we service and the various needs that come up.

As a teacher at the high school, I feel compelled to address an email put out by the CEO stating that students who are speaking out are our pawns by the teachers or CCP students. This could not be further from the truth. When it hit the news that teachers were being let go and may choose to apply for their jobs the student body went crazy. Suddenly students were asking who was tenured and who wasn't. At the Board of Education meeting that occurred after this announcement students on their own spoke up and gave their own testimony, and not all of them were CCP students either - the students the CEO sent in an email stating the CCP students are the ones who have good teachers for the most part.

I am also in disbelief that once again a group got together and behind closed doors and without teacher input are developing The Ohio school Transformation Plan. This to me smells of the similar way we got HB70.

As I have said, I love working with the students of Lorain City Schools, but student and teacher morale have hit an all time low. Back in October, a student aide walked into the room fully annoyed. When I asked her what was wrong she replied that she didn't know what happened to the school this year. All these new people, she was referring to the massive amount of new administrators at the high school, and nobody can tell here anything. Then she went on about the large amount of fights. At a wedding a couple of weeks ago a couple at the table found out I worked at Lorain High, and asked how I could because they had read all of the bad press. And on my last day of school I stopped at the gas station and I was in a very upbeat mood. The attendant inquired why, and I explained it was the last day of school. She asked where I worked and I got the usual, Oh I'm sorry. I can't stand that is the reputation we have now.

Ladies and gentlemen - thank you for your time and listening to my testimony. I hope you seriously consider it and vote to keep HB166 as it is.

Thank you.