

Chair Lehner, Vice-Chair Terhar, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Senate Education Committee.

I appreciate the opportunity to submit interested party testimony on House Bill 166. My name is James R. Gant, Esq., and I am the Deputy Superintendent for Toledo Public Schools. At this point, you have received several interested party statements from supporters of Toledo Public Schools. Please note that these interested parties include community, administration, parents, and our board. This reflects, in part, the support of the Toledo Public Schools Board of Education and Dr. Durant, Superintendent of Toledo Public Schools, and the direction in which Toledo Public Schools is heading.

This support is more evident in the passage of two (2) levies in November 2018 by sixty eight percent (68%). Dr. Durant, the Toledo Public School Board, and the administration fully accept that Toledo Public Schools has work that needs to be done. That said, it is important to build upon our gains. The district gains include, but are not limited to:

- Increased graduation rates since 2014, from 64% to 79% overall, from 60% to 80% for African-American students, from 59% to 77% for economically disadvantaged students, and from 54% to 70% for students with disabilities;
- Improved 3rd grade promotion rates from 71.9% to 85% since 2015;
- Increased enrollment in TPS schools by over 1,700 students;
- Worked collaboratively between our Board, our Administration, and our bargaining units on innovation and additional supports that lift-up our students;
- Opened the Aerospace and Natural Science Academy of Toledo, where we graduate both licensed airplane mechanics and urban agriculturalists, who become a part of Toledo's growing food production industry;
- Merged a performing bilingual charter school, Toledo SMART Academy, into the Toledo Public School system.

It is difficult to accept the designation of a failing district with these gains, the staff that have been engaged in obtaining said gains, as well as the students and families that have experienced these gains.

It is also important to note that the district's momentum is, in large part, due to the willingness to collaborate with outside partners in furtherance of supporting the whole child. Without a doubt,

supporting the whole child is challenging, specifically when there are over 2,700 homeless students in the district and 86% of our students receive free or reduced lunch.

We support eliminating the ADC entirely, and returning control to the local school board. These boards are tasked with knowing the local needs of the community, as the school district is crucial to the success of any community. Any plan should include:

- Approval of the Superintendent, School Board, and all interested labor organizations;
- The Superintendent and the School Board must be accountable to the citizens by retaining the authority to negotiate labor agreements, and expend funds consistent with established policies and procedures;
- A partnership with the state to ensure proper funding and technical assistance, when appropriate, consistent with the Superintendent and School Board's plan of action;
- Implementation of proven successful intervention for schools that are similarly situated.

I am a proponent that all change happens at the local level within the community. The Toledo Public School District's gains began, in part, within the Toledo Public School District and have grown to include our local community. Ensuring that the Superintendent and our Board of Education retain the ability to control district operations consistent with the will of the local community is the only pathway to success. Thank you for allowing to me to submit this written testimony.