Testimony 4 for State Legislators, on Thursday, June 13, 2019

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

The city of East Cleveland is a wonderful unique place to live. The school system has been for many years a focal point of our community. The schools, the students, the faculty and staff are what help to make our community vibrant.

East Cleveland like so many other communities has high rates of poverty, lack of jobs; many homes have had mortgage foreclosures that have left our neighborhoods blighted. All of the aforementioned has added to the problems regarding our community. Our school system is a microcosm of the community.

As you look across the United States you see school takeovers by State Officials that have not worked; for example in cities like Michigan, Tennessee, Detroit, New Orleans and some others. It is abysmal and evident to anyone who researches in depth – school takeovers by the State has not worked. Examine what has happened within the state of Ohio. We have a reform minded group of state officials that I believe mean well and are desirous of taking schools in economically depressed communities, with the ADC model that has not worked. Believe me; if this mode was effective, everyone would rush to it. I have read the proposed changes of House bill 166. It is more of the same with the change from ADC to School Improvement Commission. A name change and what we need is a change in philosophy. You appoint more people with different titles and give more money to top heavy administration while the children need books, electronics, supplies and services.

In East Cleveland, we have one school that received an overall failing grade yet; the whole school district has been subjected to the implementation of the Academic Distress Commission (ADC). We become the Guinea Pigs or as one community resident has said, “We are the canaries that they send down the mind shaft.” The State has two failures with House Bill 70 as evidenced in both Lorain and Youngstown and now the State of Ohio has added the East Cleveland School District because we are powerless to stop you.

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The State of Ohio is saying we know what is best for you. The cookie cutter, assembly line method that has been advanced by House Bill 70 is victimizing those who are least able to protest. The hostile takeover of the East Cleveland School District is because of the lower economic status of East Cleveland residents, who are because of color and class are being disenfranchised, alienated and marginalized by a piece of legislation that should have never been passed.

As a retired educator, I can say we know what works we have done it in East Cleveland for years in our continued quest to meet the needs of the whole child. That is smaller classes, more counselors, social workers, wraparound social and medical services, more school enrichment programs and training for the Professional Staff.

The State of Ohio is on the precipice of helping the children of Ohio or doing more of the same. I am asking you to put in place programs and people who are bout educating our students. Put in place those who know and understand the pedagogy of the art of teaching. If you truly want to help, then help get rid of House Bill 70 the hostile takeover of schools with the ADC’s that have been ineffective. I sincerely request that the Senate Pass legislation that will help our students, our parents, and our communities. We are depending on you to right an egregious wrong for the great State of Ohio and for the wealth and wellbeing of the children of our State.

Blessings to each of you.