

Chair Lehner, Vice-Chair Terhar, Ranking Minority Member Fedor, and esteemed members of the Ohio Senate Education Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony to this respected committee. My name is Jeanne Melvin, and I am a retired school teacher and president of *Public Education Partners*, a statewide advocacy group for public school districts and the children and families that they serve.

The Board of *Public Education Partners* (PEP) vigorously opposes any school takeover law, whether it’s called HB 70 or Sub HB 154. Ohioans have never ever agreed to any initiative to give the state authority to take over struggling public school districts.

In fact, thousands of Ohio citizens contacted your offices earlier in 2019 to respectfully ask you to eliminate school takeovers by approving the language in the House-passed version of HB 154.

It has been proven that the state’s calculation of the school district report cards, upon which school takeovers are based, is statistically flawed (Toledo Blade, 7/26/19.) How can legislative leaders justify using misconstrued data to cause the disruption and destruction that accompanies school district takeovers?

An overwhelming majority of the public believes that disinvestment in schools, which our previous governor and the General Assemblies authorized over the last eight years, is a primary obstacle to a high-quality public education.

There really is a better way than school takeovers. Research and analysis of successful school reform efforts have revealed several necessary supports, such as access to high quality early childhood and pre-K programs, a learning environment centered on students, positive and restorative discipline practices, and real investment in public school districts.

The Cincinnati Public School District is an example of meeting student and community needs via collaborative, homegrown partnerships. These partnerships have turned Cincinnati’s schools into community hubs, called “Community Learning Centers,” which might offer, depending on community need, after-care, English language classes, health care services, or arts programs. The idea is for schools to serve the entire community: students, parents, and residents.

PEP supports the House-passed version of HB 154, which would replace HB 70 with an evidence-based turnaround model created to restore local control and improve student outcomes for Ohio’s children. The changes made to alter HB 154 into Sub HB 154 were unneeded revisions to a very promising policy that was originally designed to dissolve and replace academic distress commissions and to encourage wraparound services for high-poverty schools.

House-passed HB 154 is an evidence-based model that was created using results from a 5-year research study of school turnaround by the American Institutes for Research (AIR) in MA. Those field-tested results were the basis for the language of HB 154.

Where is the research to back up Sub HB 154? Where are the field-tested results?

Passage of Sub HB 154 as written will entrap Ohio with yet another school takeover law that ignores thoughtful research in favor of ideology and politics.

Over 600 traditional public school districts in Ohio serve more than 1.8 million students, yet ODE and the Ohio General Assembly depend on so-called school-choice lobbyists and organizations, philanthropies, and anti-public education “think-tanks” for advice and direction in education issues.

The Senate Education Committee has the obligation to pay attention to the input of parents, educators, school leaders, and local community members who have demanded the end of state takeovers of public school districts. Please stand up for our children and say NO to the lobbyists and think-tanks who represent education profiteers.

Please revert to the original language of HB 154 before you send it out of your committee.

Thank you again for allowing me to offer written testimony on behalf of the Board of *Public Education Partners* and more importantly, in support of Ohio’s children and their families.

Jeanne Melvin, President, *Public Education Partners*

