Chair Lehner, Ranking Member Fedor and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for hearing sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 350. I will discuss the ideas and components behind the bill later in my testimony. I first want to draw the committee's attention to Chapter 3327 of the Ohio Revised Code. More specifically section 3327.01 Transportation of Pupils (linked here: http://codes.ohio.gov/orc/3327). While I won't restate the entire section, I would like to reiterate that in the second paragraph, current law states that, "in all city, local, and exempted village school districts where resident school pupils in grades kindergarten through eight live more than two miles from the school for which the state board of education prescribes minimum standards pursuant to division (D) of section 3301.07 of the Revised Code and to which they are assigned by the board of education of the district of residence or to and from the nonpublic or community school which they attend, the board of education shall provide transportation for such pupils to and from that school…"

There is no equivocating current law. A shall is mandatory. I understand the issues facing our districts in response to COVID-19 are great, however, there is no section of the code that says, "a district shall transport EXCEPT in the case of a pandemic". A school district may choose to go all online or use a hybrid model - that is their choice. The district cannot, and shall not, however, deprive those students, whose parents have chosen to send them to an alternative school, the opportunity to attend their chosen school because the district elects not to transport. That is breaking the law.

This bill came about because Dayton City Schools considered eliminating direct busing of students to community and private schools. This caused other school districts to consider something similar. As I understand, parents, the district, and charter non-public schools, are now working together on a solution. I applaud their efforts and hope they succeed. It has also come to my attention that a school district in the Akron area has started down the same path and is not providing transportation to students, similar to what happened in Dayton. While I hope the Akron district can come to a resolution on their own, this trend is startling to me and too many parents across Ohio. For this reason, Senate Bill 350 was drafted.

Senate Bill 350, for the 2020-2021 school year, prohibits a public school district from transporting students via a voucher system and instead, ensures they must continue to provide transportation in accordance with Chapter 3327 of the ORC for students in K-8. The bill requires that the Ohio Department of Education monitor compliance, and if a district is found to not be complying, the department shall deduct from the district's payment for student transportation the total daily amount of that payment for each day that the district is not in compliance. While I am

not against the practice of issuing vouchers or using alternative means of transportation, many parents are concerned about having their children in kindergarten, first, and second grade riding alone on public transportation. Safety should always be a priority for children and that is what Senate Bill 350 works to maintain.

Lastly, this bill is a work in progress. My office has asked LSC to draft several amendments, which we are discussing with interested parties dealing with transportation. I am very grateful to LSC, especially Allison Schoeppner and Mike Niemi for drafting the bill and many amendments. I am open to suggestions on how to make this bill better. If there's an opportunity to allow for districts to innovate during this pandemic, while maintaining compliance with current law, I am interested in hearing all ideas.

Chairwoman Lehner, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 350 and I would be happy to answer any questions you have at this time.