

Good afternoon, Chair Lehner, Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Senate Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today regarding Senate Bill (SB) 350. My name is Patrick Schymanski, and I am a school board member from the Elida Local Schools system. I am opposed to SB350. I am deeply concerned of the precedent that this bill sets. Having a State legislator write a bill that pits one segment of a community against another is never desirable.

The school I represent did have its own financial struggles in the 2008-2012 era. Among the financial cuts debated was stopping busing for all high school students, public, private and charter. Eventually, through discussion other belt tightening methods were implemented. Much of this happened before I was on the board, but, via community discussion, the school did find ways to survive.

Financially, our school is still fiscally fragile, and we work hard to control our expenses in our small community. Luckily, we only have a few non-public schools to transport students too and they are all within a few miles of our school. Our situation is quite different than the large school districts who are struggling with busing costs. I am sure their school boards are heavily weighing the cost of bus and the emotional impact that offering alternative transportation brings.

This is a local problem and trying to have big government solve local issues is fraught with dangers. The solution to punish districts that are trying to balance their costs fails to recognize the root cause of this problem.

If the school district had sufficient funding, would we be talking about alternative student transportation. Ideally, any solution addresses the root cause of the problem and if the state government wishes to step in, I would ask that you address the root cause of the problem. Not, simply propose a fix that makes one small segment of the community happy by punishing the entire district.

The community does have options, they can file a lawsuit, petition the school board, try to recall some or all of the elected school board officials or, in the long game, someone can run for school board.

I urge you to help the community solve its problems, not by providing a legislative, short-term fix but by encouraging community discussion and community resolution to the problem.

Respectfully,

Patrick Schymanski  
Legislative Liaison  
Elida Local School Board Member