

79TH HOUSE DISTRICT

PARTS OF CLARK COUNTY
INCLUDING: SPRINGFIELD, NEW CARLISLE,
SOUTH CHARLESTON, AND ENON

COMMITTEES

CHAIR: AGRICULTURE & RURAL
DEVELOPMENT
FEDERALISM
PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION



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State Representative Kyle Koehler
Ohio House of Representatives

Chairman Lehner, Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Fedeor and members of the Senate Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony for Amended House Bill 409, which holds online schools accountable by amending the sections of the Revised Code, which relate to student participation. House Bill 409 gained tremendous support in the House, passing out of the House Primary and Secondary Committee with a 15-0 vote and unanimously passing out of the House with a 90-0 vote.

Under present law, a student enrolled in an e-school in Ohio must be withdrawn after 72 consecutive hours of unexcused absence. The present structure of the law makes it possible for a student enrolled in e-school to completely neglect schoolwork for up to 71 hours (missing the equivalent of days of school and many chapters of material) only to log back in for a few minutes to avoid being withdrawn and potentially referred for truancy. Logging in resets the clock and allows a student disengaged from schoolwork to remain in good standing.

Online schools do a fantastic job for thousands of students. The personalized learning environment and self-paced instructional programs allow many students to thrive academically. However, by not implementing clear and enforceable attendance requirements, many students “game the system” and fail to engage. HB 409 requires e-schools to adopt a policy that states:

“you are in attendance if you participate in at least 90% of the instructional activities OR if you are on pace for on-time completion of all enrolled courses.”

This empowers e-schools to enforce attendance requirements without sacrificing the flexibility granted by online education.

Furthermore, House Bill 409 requires that internet based and e-schools submit a written report to parent, guardian, or custodian of each student who has logged 30 or more hours of unexcused absence in a semester. This provisions forces online schools to address absenteeism early on.

Unlike current law, HB 409 creates consequences, including disenrollment, for students who

1. Fail to comply with attendance requirements after their parent, guardian, or custodian is alerted of the student’s excessive unexcused absence.

AND

2. Fail to comply with the e-schools attendance policy, as a whole.

In the event that an e-school disenrolls a student, HB 409 requires the e-school provide a list of alternative education options to the student’s parent, guardian, or custodian and send a written notice to the student’s home school district alerting them of the disenrollment within 48-hours. Furthermore, if a student is disenrolled from an e-school, they will be prohibited from enrolling in another e-school for one calendar year unless it is classified as a dropout recovery school.

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I want to make it clear; this bill does not apply to dropout recovery schools. These schools are, in effect, the last hope for many young adult in obtaining a high school diploma or GED and already provide strict and regimented policies regarding student attendance.

The best interest of students in e-schools, both for their educational growth and personal safety, is served by holding schools accountable for student attendance and completion of instructional activities. As legislators, it is also in our best interests as stewards of Ohioans' tax dollars that we ensure that the money we give to e-schools is used effectively to educate students. House Bill 409 accomplishes these goals.

Thank you Chair Lehner for allowing me to present Amended House Bill 409 for consideration. I welcome your questions.