

Chairman Baldrige, Vice Chair McClain, Ranking Member Sheehy, and Members of the Ohio House Transportation and Public Safety Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in support of House Bill 494, which would allow for the creation of “school adjacent zones”. My name is Robert Fischer and I’m the proud Superintendent at National Trail Local Schools in New Paris, Ohio.

National Trail Local Schools is located in Preble County just across the border from Richmond, Indiana near Interstate 70. National Trail is home to approximately 1000 students and 152 staff members who come to school each day in a K-12, single building campus.

Within my District, National Trail Local Schools has been impacted on numerous occasions as a result of traffic incidents that have taken place on the major roadways that surround the school. National Trail is named because it sits on the National Trail. As one would guess, National Trail Local Schools is sandwiched between US-40 (The National Road) and Interstate 70. In addition, National Trail Local Schools is located less than 3 miles north of St. Rt. 35. To be more specific about the location of National Trail and to give you some additional perspective. When you are traveling east on Interstate 70 and enter Ohio from Indiana, the first exit in Ohio is exit 1, which is St. Rt. 35. The next exit traveling east is exit 10, St. Rt. 127. National Trail can be seen from interstate 70 midway between both of the afore mentioned exits. When you travel west from Columbus, the last exit before leaving Ohio on Interstate 70 is exit 10, St. Rt. 127. After that exit, there is not another way to exit Interstate 70 until you cross the border into Indiana. The first exit after St. Rt. 127 is, ironically US Rt. 40 (Indiana exit 156B).

When there is heavy traffic or an accident on any one of these major roadways, drivers tend to cut across from one major highway to the other in order to save time on their commute. For example, if an

accident has occurred anywhere between exit 10 and the Indiana border (heading west). Vehicles will take exit 10 and take St. Rt. 127 North to US Rt. 40 west and pass right by National Trail Local Schools. If an accident were to take place in the eastbound lane of I70, traffic would take exit 1 (St. Rt. 35) then cut across on Oxford-Gettysburg Rd (Passing in front of the school) in order to reconnect to US 40 and then to interstate 70 at mile marker 10. Typically, these drivers pass by National Trail Local Schools at the same rate of speed they would drive if they were on the Interstate. As a result, these “reroutes” have caused multiple accidents and traffic incidents and it is a constant danger to children and educators who may be walking or pulling in or out from the school. If our buses need to travel to the northern portion of my district. All traffic, bus and cars, must pass over US. Rt. 40. Unfortunately, there is no way to avoid this road. Over the past year, there have been a minimum of five (5) separate traffic incidents that have caused traffic issues for my district at either release or start time. Including the most recent fatal accident on Interstate 70 that happened on Thursday, March 10th. If needed, I would be happy to provide pictures and video of the traffic congestion that has resulted from several of these “reroutes”.

If HB 494 is approved, will allow my school district the opportunity to create a “school adjacent zone,” in addition to the traditional 20 mph school zone that currently exist in the front of my school district. This bill would also allow for signage that would give fair notice to drivers using US Rt. 40 as they pass by the National Trail Local School District.

Our District motto is #ItsBETTERtobe aBLAZER. Our goal at National Trail is to make each day a meaningful experience for our students. In addition, we spend a tremendous amount of time ensuring the safety and well-being of each and every student who enters our facility. With

the addition of this bill, it would simply be another way National Trail can add an additional level of safety.

HB 494 is a simple, common-sense bill to help slow traffic and provide students, staff and our school buses with a safer route and exit to and from school each morning and afternoon. My goal is to make sure we avoid a catastrophic situation from ever taking place in my school district. Simply put, we want to avoid the need for this bill further down the road.

Before, ending I would like to thank House Representative Rodney Creech for sponsoring, for what I believe, is a much-needed bill.

Finally, member of this committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 494.

I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.