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**Majority Floor Leader Bill Seitz
The Ohio House of Representatives**

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Sponsor Testimony for House Bill 348: Create Pilot Programs to Increase Student Attendance and Graduation

Chair Bird, Vice Chair Fowler Arthur, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 348. The proposed bill, which is set to be implemented in fiscal years 2024 and 2025, introduces two innovative pilot programs that prioritize the educational path of our kindergarten and ninth-grade students and appropriates \$750,000 to fund each pilot program.

Firstly, the bill establishes the Attendance Incentive Pilot Program, a strategic effort to boost attendance rates for kindergarten and ninth-grade students. Under this program, cash transfers will be provided as incentives for students who maintain high attendance rates. For kindergarteners, these transfers will be payable to the student's parent or guardian, while for ninth graders, they will be jointly payable to the student and their parent or guardian. To ensure the effective implementation of the pilot program, interested city, local, and exempted village school districts are invited to apply. Each district may indicate up to two schools for enrollment, and they have the flexibility to choose the most suitable incentive distribution method for their student population. The proposed distribution methods include biweekly transfers of \$25, quarterly transfers of \$150, and annual transfers of \$500 during the school year. This tailored approach acknowledges the unique needs of each school.

Participating schools will be carefully selected by the Department of Education and Workforce. At least one rural school district and one urban school district will be included, both of which must exhibit chronic absenteeism in the highest quartile based on the most recent state report card ratings. This targeted selection ensures that the pilot program addresses attendance challenges where they are most prevalent.

Participating schools are obligated to submit detailed reports to the Department, covering participating students in both incentivized and control groups, attendance rates from the year

preceding the pilot program, and monthly attendance rates during the program. These reporting requirements ensure a comprehensive evaluation of the program's impact on student attendance.

The second component of this transformative initiative is the Graduation Incentive Pilot Program, designed to provide financial awards to high school graduates. This forward-thinking approach not only encourages attendance but also underscores the importance of successfully completing high school. Qualifying school districts, defined as those receiving federal Title I funding and ranked in the lowest 20% based on the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate, are eligible to apply for up to two schools to participate in the pilot program. A base award of \$250 is provided for each student graduating from a qualifying high school. Additional amounts, ranging from \$250 to \$750, are allocated for graduating students with GPAs of 3.0 or higher and 3.5 or higher.

Reporting requirements for participating school districts include the number of students in the pilot program, graduation rates for each school in the qualifying district before and after the pilot program, and GPAs of graduating seniors in the three years preceding and following the program's implementation. These detailed reports ensure transparency and accountability, enabling a thorough assessment of the program's impact on graduation rates and academic performance.

It's important to note that the bill explicitly safeguards individual student data by declaring any records related to the pilot programs as non-public. This commitment to privacy ensures that the focus remains on improving educational outcomes without compromising the confidentiality of student information.