

Prepared Notes for House Education Committee

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Chairman Stebelton, Ranking Member Fedor, good afternoon. My name is Marc Schare and I am a member of the Worthington City Schools Board of Education.

I want to share some thoughts on this legislation and some issues it raises. I will take but 3 minutes of your time.

SB21 is a small improvement on a bad law. It is bad law because it mandates a one size fits all solution, retention, to the complex problem of a child not being able to demonstrate sufficient mastery of reading on a state assessment. For some children in these circumstances, retention is exactly the right thing to do. For others, it can have devastating life-impacting consequences. Who is in the best position to make that call – the state legislature, or the child’s parents, teachers, principals, psychologists, Intervention Assistance Team and the Superintendent of the school district?

Every so often, individual members of the legislature will solicit suggestions for reduction of the number of mandates put upon local school districts. I am often astounded at the amount of administrative time and money spent trying to keep up on the treadmill of compliance. From my vantage point as a school board member, I can tell you that it is sometimes exhausting. In this case, the Ohio Revised Code now dictates the who, what, when, where and why of reading interventions for struggling readers. Allow me to propose an alternative approach.

The Ohio School Boards Association preaches to new school board members that they should hire district leaders and hold them accountable for results. Granted, as a group, we’re not great on the accountability piece, but the state legislature should consider adapting much of that underlying philosophy. State law has empowered the legislature to delegate responsibility to local school districts. Instead of trying to micromanage every aspect of public education, why not mandate high level policy and then hold school districts accountable. If a school district fails to implement the high level policy dictated by the state, there are any number of ways to rectify the situation, however, if a school district is generally doing what you want, allow that school district some freedom from the micromanagement embodied in legislation such as SB21 and the third grade reading guarantee. I’ve told my constituents that local control in public education in Ohio is a myth. No one can look at SB21 and ORC 3313.608 and seriously argue that statement. It doesn’t have to be that way. You can use SB21 as a vehicle to try an experiment. Exempt from mandatory retention those school districts that have demonstrated an ability to get struggling readers to grade level. Let ODE pick the criteria used to demonstrate that ability. Give us the chance to do what is right for each individual child and then hold us accountable for the results. I would love to see Ohio return to the tradition of local control in education and this is a great issue to start with. I thank you for your time.