



**Ohio Senate Education Committee  
Senate Bill 320  
Ohio School Boards Association  
Interested Party Testimony  
June 24, 2020**

Chairwoman Lehner, Vice Chairman Brenner, Ranking Member Fedor and members of the Ohio Senate Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on Senate Bill (SB) 320. My name is Jennifer Hogue, and I am the director of legislative services for the Ohio School Boards Association (OSBA). OSBA represents public school district boards of education, career-technical center boards of education and educational service center boards of education.

Our members would like to extend their appreciation to this body for your work on House Bill (HB) 164 and incorporating many of their requests into that legislation. They also are appreciative of Gov. Mike DeWine, Lt. Gov. Jon Husted and State Superintendent Paolo DeMaria for including OSBA and other stakeholders at the table as guidance and directives are considered for the upcoming school year. OSBA has been fortunate to participate in these discussions and share our members' desire for flexibility and the need to retain their ability to make decisions that fit their needs.

School districts face a variety of challenges as they plan to return to school this fall. SB 320 recognizes the need for flexibility to address those challenges and to implement a safe and successful 2020-21 school year. No two school districts are the same, and SB 320 reinforces the need to respect the unique and diverse circumstances and needs of our schools and that of the students they serve.

SB 320 also respects and maintains the fundamental pillar of Ohio's education system: local control. Locally elected members of Ohio's boards of education serve and represent their communities and are in the best position to make decisions about their districts while taking external factors and circumstances into account.

SB 320 does raise several questions about which our members have serious concerns. School districts face a highly uncertain legal landscape as many are planning to resume in-the-building instruction amid attempts to prevent the existence or spread of the Coronavirus. The virus has altered learning and working environments, and school districts will need additional liability protections to allow them to choose what they believe is the best course of action for their communities. Additionally, it is uncertain whether school districts would still need to follow basic building, fire, transportation and safety guidelines.

It is unknown what the next several weeks will bring, but we know that districts have been planning for all scenarios and are well prepared to proceed with the plan that best meets the needs of their students in any given situation.

We request that you carefully consider this legislation and ensure that districts and their students are not unintentionally harmed by its passage. We appreciate the local control given by SB 320, but want to ensure that it is balanced with protections for districts and the students they serve.

Chairwoman Lehner and members of the Ohio Senate Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on SB 320.