

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Senator Joy Padgett, Chairwoman

May 15, 2007

Chairwoman Padgett and members of the committee; my name is Fred Pausch, and I am the Director of Legislative Services for the Ohio School Boards Association (OSBA). The Ohio School Boards Association is in its 52nd year of service to public education serving Ohio's public school boards.

I appreciate the opportunity to come before you today in support of S.C.R. No. 3 in its current form, with respect to urging the President and the Congress to amend the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) and to fully fund the appropriations authorized in the Act.

This is an important year for NCLB Reauthorization in Congress as both Federal House and Senate Education Committees continue to hold hearings on various provisions of the NCLB Act. Local school boards in Ohio continue to welcome the goals of NCLB including increased accountability for student performance. The NCLB Act has included creating or expanding testing programs for grades three—eight and one year of high school, providing assistance to schools in need of improvement, reserving more Title I funds for supplemental service providers and local administrative costs, and putting strategies and programs in place to ensure that all teachers meet NCLB's teacher quality requirements.

Many of these costs that Ohio School districts have faced to comply with the requirements of the NCLB Act have been passed down from the mandates of this act and local districts must absorb these costs that federal funds are not covering. “Overall, federal funding for NCLB has stagnated for several years. Provisions of the law have resulted in a shift of funds so that, in school year 2005-06, two-thirds of school districts in the country received no increases or lost funds as compared to the previous year,” according to the Center on Education policy and its 2006 report “Ten Big Effects of the No Child Left Behind Act on Public Schools”.

The two areas of federal funding that have not kept pace for Ohio’s school districts are federal funds for Title I and IDEA grants. Federal appropriations for Title I do not account for the changes needed in the program for schools. Many districts have made improvements to meet the adequate yearly progress requirements of NCLB, which include class-size reductions, summer school, and professional development of teachers that most if not all require additional funding.

Currently, federal IDEA funding covers roughly 18% of per pupil expenditures for students with disabilities, leaving the rest of the costs to states and local school districts. At one time over 30 years ago, Congress had promised to cover 40% of the costs of the Individuals With Disabilities Act and has yet to fulfill that promise.

For many local school districts in Ohio the financial burden of IDEA alone has placed many districts in cost cutting modes for their other programs. One district in NE Ohio has had federal funding increases in recent years and now the federal government contributes 9.3% of their total district’s costs, the state of Ohio contributes 24.5% and the local taxpayers contribute 66.2%. The special education costs in this district alone will consume a full 19.4% or nearly one fifth of their annual operating budget of \$79 million. The portion that the federal government committed to pay but that indeed they are not paying in the current fiscal year is \$4.8 million, equivalent to 5.1 mills in that district. The replacement dollars have had to come from state and

local funding to make up the difference to cover the federal government's shortfall. This is only one example, from one school district in Ohio but many districts in Ohio receive on average roughly 7% to 11% of their total revenues from the federal government but under the requirements of both NCLB and IDEA can comprise up to 30% of a school districts total budget.

In order for our Ohio districts to be effective in fulfilling NCLB requirements and ensuring proficiency in all areas of the federal law, federal funding must be fully-funded in the reauthorized process of the "No Child Left Behind Act" and S.C.R. 3, when passed will send a strong message for this to occur for Ohio school districts.

Thank you and I would be happy to try to answer your questions.