



*Perrysburg
Schools*

**Education Committee
Senate Bill 8 Testimony
Perrysburg Exempted Village Schools Superintendent
March 1, 2017**

Good afternoon Chairman Lehner, Vice-Chairman Huffman, Ranking Minority Member Sykes and members of the Education Committee. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify today in support of Senate Bill 8. My name is Tom Hosler and I am Superintendent of Perrysburg Schools, which has over 5,000 students in northwest Ohio. I have been a school superintendent for over 17 years: eight years in Michigan and over nine years with Perrysburg Schools. I am also Vice-Chair of the Alliance for High Quality Education.

I would like to voice my support for the creation of a program through the Ohio Facilities Construction Commission to provide school districts an opportunity to access a share of eligible funds for the purpose of security, technology and minor additions. While Ohio led the nation with the creation of the Ohio School Facilities Commission in May 1997 and now through the Ohio Facilities Construction Commission, Senate Bill 8 would offer an alternative to an existing program that feels to many school districts like a “one size fits all” approach.

Perrysburg Schools ranks 26th out of 609 Ohio school districts in the percentage of student growth over the last five years. When factoring just school districts with more than 4,500 students, Perrysburg is the 7th fastest growing district in the state.

In 2014, the community supported a \$38.9 million bond issue, among other things, to construct a new school to house over 800 students. The community also demanded increased safety and security at our other schools, so we set aside \$1.2 million from the bond to install security vestibules with cameras and communication devices in our elementary schools. In addition, the school district has set aside \$200,000 in permanent improvement funds to secure the entrances at our junior high and high schools.

The events of April 20, 1999 forever changed how we view school safety. The Columbine school shooting taught us the importance of securing buildings, incorporating technology into our security plans and how schools and law enforcement react to threats. In Perrysburg, like many school districts across the state, we have a mixed age of school buildings, ranging from 1953 to 2001. None were designed in the post-Columbine age. We face increasing challenges monitoring individuals who enter our schools.

When Perrysburg's newest school opened in 2001, it did not have a wireless network. In 2006, the district installed a network similar to what you may have at home to support a small number of wireless devices. In 2012, Perrysburg Schools upgraded the network to support students in grades 5-12 who each have a school district-issued device. We have now outgrown the capacity for our infrastructure to support the more than 4,500 daily wireless users that rely on these devices. We are in the process of upgrading our capacity again and the estimated cost is \$446,000.

School leaders must prioritize available local funds for safety, security, technology and the need for new classrooms. Perrysburg Schools, one of the fastest growing districts in the state, is ranked #496 in the OFCC schedule and will have just 18% of the share coming from the OFCC program.

I would also propose that Senate Bill 8 be a vehicle to enable districts that would like to construct small additions to school buildings for much needed classroom space. For example, in Perrysburg lack of classroom space has been one of the barriers in providing all day kindergarten for all students, something that we are working to change in the future.

Senate Bill 8 has the potential to address these vital issues of safety, security and technology within a framework that has a proven record of success while providing earmarked funds to communities that may need the support in these key areas sooner than later. I want to thank the co-sponsors, Senators Gardner and Terhar, for listening and moving this proposal forward.

Thank you for your time and for the work you do for all of Ohio's children.
Chairmen Lehner, thank you for this opportunity.