



September 23, 2016 – Submitted Written Testimony

Thank you Chair Lehner, Vice Chair Hite, Ranking Minority Representative Sawyer and Senate Education Committee members.

My name is Gabriella Celeste and I offer brief testimony to you as Policy Director of the Schubert Center and an interested party in legislative matters concerning student development, school truancy and discipline, specifically House Bill 410. Our Center supports developmentally-informed policy efforts to decriminalize truancy, reduce the unnecessary use of out-of-school suspension (OSS) and expulsion and to promote positive school climate and student success. Toward this end, we have been engaged in multiple stakeholder meetings and submitted prior testimony on HB 410 to both this Committee (5/19/16) and to the the House Education Committee (2/16/16).

As has been repeatedly noted in earlier testimony, the research makes abundantly clear that **positive school connectedness matters to healthy child development**. When students feel cared for and a part of the school community, they become less likely to engage in risky behaviors such as substance use, violence, or sexual activity at an early age.¹ Conversely, removing a student from the school environment and socially isolating them, can be extremely harmful to a youth's healthy development and positive social engagement.² When students are removed from the classroom as a disciplinary measure, whether for truancy or another reason, the odds increase dramatically that they will repeat a grade, drop out, or become involved in the juvenile justice system.³

The HB 410 school discipline amendments offered to HB 410 are important because they address the relationship between truancy, school climate, student removal and disengagement. Truancy is a red flag for educational failure that is not only linked to dropping out of high school in the long term, but also to suspension, expulsion, or delinquent behavior in the short term.⁴ Overly punitive schools, such as those with high use of OSS and expulsion, disincentivize school attendance. Instead of a mandated punitive policy, the HB 410 amendments rely on a tiered disciplinary approach and reinforce positive school climate by strengthening students' ability to stay connected to their schools.

To only focus on the truancy part of the school failure equation undermines the ability of HB 410 to adequately address key contributing factors to student drop-out and disconnect. Ohio's future economy and prosperity depends on the success of our students today. The proposed discipline amendments to HB 410 recognize that keeping students positively engaged in, connected to and successful in their education begins with keeping them in schools, committed to their achievement.

Thank you for your consideration and leadership on these important matters. Please contact me at mgc36@case.edu (216-368-5314) should you have any questions.

¹ McNeely, C.A., Nonnemaker, J.M., Blum, R.W. "Promoting Student Connectedness to School: Evidence from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health." *Journal of School Health*, Vol. 72 (4), 2002. Accessed at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/12029810>

² See e.g., Valtorta, N.K., Kanaan, M., Gilbody, S., Ronzi, S., Hanratty, B. "Loneliness and social isolation as risk factors for coronary heart disease and stroke." *Heart Online First*, published April 18, 2016 as 10.1136/heartjnl-2015-308790. Accessed at <http://heart.bmj.com/content/early/2016/03/15/heartjnl-2015-308790.full.pdf+html> ; Hall-Lande, J.A., Eisenberg, M.E., Christenson, S.L., Neumark-Sztainer, D. "Social Isolation, Psychological Health, and Protective Factors in Adolescence." *Adolescence*, Vol. 42, No. 166, 2007. Accessed at <https://facweb.northseattle.edu/lchaffee/PSY100/Journal%20Articles/Hall-Lande%20et%20al%202007.pdf>

³ Rivkin, D.H. Truancy Prosecutions of Students and the Right [to] Education. *3 Duke Forum for Law & Social Change*. 2011; 139-161.

⁴ Bobbe J. Bridge, Leila E. Curtis, and Nicholas Oakley, "No Single Source, No Simple Solution: Why We Should Broaden Our Perspective of the School-to-Prison-Pipeline and Look to the Court in Redirecting Youth from It," *Journal of Educational Controversy* 7 (1) (Fall 2012/Winter 2013).