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Submitted June 4, 2018 for Verbal Testimony on June 5, 2018

Thank you Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Minority Member Skindell, and members of the Senate Finance Committee.

My name is Gabriella Celeste and I submit this testimony as an Interested Party in legislative matters concerning student supports, school safety and climate, specifically House Bill 318 as Amended (HB 318). As the Policy Director with the Schubert Center for Child Studies at Case Western Reserve University and Co-Director of our Childhood Studies Program, our Center bridges research with policy, practice and education for the well-being of children and families. It is in this capacity that we assist in efforts to increase student supports that foster a safe, positive school climate and culture of learning, as well as efforts to reduce factors that may contribute to discipline disparities and the “school-to-prison-pipeline” (use of the legal system to intervene in disciplinary matters more effectively addressed at school and in the community). We are also keenly aware of how recent shootings in U.S. schools have raised the urgency of school safety as critical to ensuring environments for successful learning.

As one of the partners that worked closely with the Ohio Attorney General’s Office and the Ohio SRO Association, along with others, several years ago in developing a sample SRO Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)ⁱ that HB 318 is in part based on, I want to commend the many stakeholders for finding some common ground on this bill. There certainly is value in better ensuring school resource officers (SROs) are effectively trained and in providing more clarity on the roles and expectations of SROs, along with school administrators, in a school setting. As the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) has recommended: Law enforcement should work with school partners to clearly establish the roles and expectations of any school resource officers (SROs) and that SROs should **“prioritize school completion and the implementation of developmentally appropriate responses to youth that minimize juvenile justice system involvement.”**ⁱⁱ We also benefit by having more data about the use of SROs in our schools.

Overall, while we are supportive of HB 318 in its efforts to create standards, ensure appropriate training to engage with students in age-appropriate ways and develop written MOUs to clarify the roles and expectations of SROs and school staff, it is imperative that any school safety policy promote a balanced approach to foster relationship building and positive school climate supports as part of a comprehensive a strategy for enhancing school safety and security.

“Safety” is advanced in schools when we invest in positive behavior and social and emotional supports that nurture trusting relationships and a healthy school climate.ⁱⁱⁱ As a national child research expert testified to Congress in March of this year on how research shows why it matters to support strategies “that build school communities where there is mutual trust”: *“Children with a strong connection to school staff do not bring weapons to school.”*^{iv} *When students feel a sense of attachment to their school,^v or to the adults within their school,^{vi} they are more willing to report the presence of weapons.”*^{vii}

Indeed, particularly with limited public dollars, research shows that investments in violence prevention, such as school climate and social-emotional supports, should be prioritized.^{viii} Tanner-Smith et al. analyzed school crime and safety data, specifically the use of visible security measures, including security personnel, and found they had limited deterrent effect, concluding that **“[b]y criminalizing student problem behavior, these security measures may ultimately erode student trust, create negative expectancy effects, and create jaillike learning environments that fail to provide the safe and supportive learning environments that all students deserve.”**^{ix} Instead, safety interventions and policies should operate at multiple levels with violence prevention strategies that build trusting relationships between students and adults and keep students academically engaged and challenged.

All school districts have a fundamental interest in ensuring that their schools are safe places where students can flourish academically, socially, and developmentally. Successful school and law enforcement partnerships are built on a set of shared goals and objectives. HB 318, by having an MOU in place, helps to ensure that the SRO's role is in line with the existing school policies and procedures regarding discipline and in-school interactions between students and law enforcement. To the extent that HB 318 is intended to advance school safety, it is imperative that we strike a thoughtful balance between having a school that is safe, and also continues to be an inviting space for students to learn and grow. School climate and student behavioral supports are essential both as a matter of security as well as a matter of school connectedness and educational success, and as such should be prioritized in our public investments in school safety.

Thank you.

ⁱ A link to the sample OSROA MOU and key resources used to develop it, along with a 1-pager describing the key features of that MOU can be accessed at: <http://schubert.case.edu/2016/12/sample-mou-for-clarifying-school-resource-officer-roles-and-expectations/>

ⁱⁱ International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), "Law Enforcement's Leadership Role in Juvenile Justice Reform: Actionable Recommendations for Practice and Policy" (Chicago, IL: John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, July 2014), Retrieved at: <http://www.theiacp.org/portals/0/documents/pdfs/JuvenileJusticeSummitReport.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ Thapa, A., Cohen, J., Guffey, S., et al. (2013). A Review of School Climate Research. American Educational Research Association. Retrieved at: <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.3102/0034654313483907>

^{iv} Watkins, A. (2008). Effects of Community, School, and Student Factors on School-Based Weapon Carrying. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, 6, 386–409.

^v Connell, N.M., Barbieri, N., Reingle Gonzalez, J.M. (2014). Understanding School Effects on Students' Willingness to Report Peer Weapon Carrying. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, 13(3), 258–269.

^{vi} Brank, E.M., Woolard, J.L., Brown, V.E., Fondacaro, M., Luescher, J.L., et al. (2007). "Will They Tell? Weapons Reporting by Middle-School Youth." Faculty Publications, Department of Psychology. 578. <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/psychfacpub/578>.

^{vii} Testimony of Kristen Harper, Child Trends. U.S. House Committee on Judiciary, Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, Homeland Security, and Investigations (March 20, 2018). Retrieved at: https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/WrittenTestimonyParkland2018_ChildTrends_March2018.pdf

^{viii} Tanner-Smith, E.E., Fisher, B.W., Addington, L.A. et al. Adding Security, but Subtracting Safety? Exploring Schools' use of Multiple Visible Security Measures. *Am J Crim Just* (2018) 43: 102. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12103-017-9409-3>

^{ix} Ibid.