
OCQE joins other state organizations in opposition to HB 360

While HB 360 has gone through numerous changes to adapt to growing opposition, it remains a highly prescriptive, statewide mandated discipline program.

This one-size-fits-all approach ‘ties the hands’ of superintendent’s principals and teachers.

Research proves that expulsion and suspension have repeatedly been shown to not be the best way to stop bullying or harassment.

The following are excerpts from several highly regarded Ohio stakeholders, supported by research, who expressed strong opposition with HB 360 in testimony to the House Education & Career Readiness Committee and during Interested Party meetings.

Case Western Reserve University – Shubert Center for Child Studies

“We support efforts to increase student assistance that foster a positive school climate and culture of learning – and reduce the use of exclusionary school discipline practices such as those proposed in HB 360.”

“Incidents of bullying in Ohio middle and high schools are not on the rise, and in some instances, student self-reports of bullying have been decreasing for several years.”

“Nothing in HB 360 addresses one of the biggest concerns we have heard from students and families about bullying: some schools failure to address the bullying and safeguard of the bullied child. HB 360 is not based on verifiable research.”

Juvenile Justice Coalition

“HB 360 in its current form relies on more punitive measures – including out-of-school suspensions, expulsions and higher offense levels for hazing – that actually may raise tensions in schools and further a cycle of negative behavior.”

Office of the Ohio Public Defender

“OPD believes that HB 360 will further contribute to the school-to-prison pipeline that is currently plaguing Ohio’s youth. All too often children who struggle with their behavior are pushed from the school into the criminal justice system. According to the national statistics cited by the

Children’s Defense Fund of Ohio, a history of suspensions from school is one of the strongest indicators that a child will enter the juvenile justice system.”

“Finally, OPD is also troubled regarding the hazing portion of the bill.”

Columbus City Schools

“HB 360, with its mandatory language dealing with suspensions and expulsions not only overrides the school’s opportunity to ‘teach and correct’, but it also seems to be in direct conflict with HB 410 Truancy legislation that was signed into law to do everything possible to not push problematic children out of school. The Legislative Service Commission Final Analysis notes for HB 410, *Requires that the State Board of Education develop a model policy that stresses preventative strategies and alternatives to suspension or expulsion, for use by schools in complying with the modified requirements.*

Schools, principals and teachers would be trapped between two diametrically opposed pieces of legislation. That’s the exact dilemma that would be created if HB 360 were passed into law.”

Ohio Coalition for Quality Education

HB 360 contains an extensive list of mandates that are not supported by solid research.

Schools that have been proactive in areas of bullying and who have developed strong protocols to address this issue should be respected – not burdened with a new set of legislative directives that may undo much of the progress they’ve achieved in limiting bullying and harassment in their schools.

Principals, teachers and school governing boards are closer to their students than legislators and are in the best position to understand and deal with these types of issues in their schools.

Summary

Before rolling out HB 360 to more than 3,000 Ohio public schools, we would encourage members of the House Education & Career Readiness Committee stop this bill before children are harmed by ‘good intentions’.

Another option would be to confine HB 360 to a limited pilot project to develop valuable research and help determine what approaches may work - and those that do not.

Also, a narrow pilot program would be viewed by Ohio voters, not as a legislative overreach, but as a much more reasonable approach than yet another bill filled with mandates that would burden their schools and continue to weaken local control.

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