OHIO ASSOCIATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS
8050 NORTH HIGH STREET • SUITE 180 • COLUMBUS, OHIO 43235-6484
614/430-8311 FAX 614/430-8315

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Chair Uecker, Vice-Chair Young, Ranking Member Yuko, and members of the House Commerce and Labor Committee, my name is Ken Baker, and I serve as the Associate Executive Director of the Ohio Association of Secondary School Administrators. Our association provides professional development, legal assistance, service and leadership opportunities, and representation for over 2100 administrators throughout the state of Ohio. Our membership includes middle level and high school principals, assistant principals, athletic directors, supervisors, coordinators, directors, and many assistant superintendents. My personal background is one that contains experience as a teacher, coach, athletic director and, for over 25 years, as a high school principal and superintendent of schools. I have personally experienced many of the issues being discussed in Senate Bill 5 having served on both sides of the collective bargaining process.

We join other education management organizations in supporting many of the proposals in SB 5. However, there is one specific portion of the bill that has attracted the attention of our association and our membership. The bill would eliminate the ability of a local board of education to pay the employee share of contributions to the State Teachers Retirement System.

When the collective bargaining act was initially passed, administrative personnel were specifically excluded from the right to bargain. Consequently, the board of education would negotiate with the teacher's union, and the administrative team was often given compensation that reflected what was left in the budget. Most of our members are not recipients of administrative salary schedules that provide salary increases for years of experience or additional training, unlike what the teaching staff might receive in their district. Over the years, the separation in salaries between an experienced teacher with an advanced degree, and an administrator, has become less and less. While teachers would typically work on a 182-185 day contract, the building administrators would have contracts that extended to 220-260 days of service. As teachers would look to an administrative position as a career objective, many would hesitate because the salary was not comparable to what they were making in the classroom, especially when viewed on a per-diem basis.

Due to the negligible salary differential, more working days, more events and activities to supervise, and more accountability, there has been a resulting effect of fewer applications for administrative positions throughout Ohio. As a response to this, many local boards of education provided to prospective administrators the incentive of paying part or all of their contribution to the retirement system. If the administrator loses this benefit, and the contribution is deducted from his/her paycheck, the actual result will be a reduction in pay of about 10%. I am confident that this change would keep many of our best and brightest from considering school administration as a career objective.

Other parts of SB 5, such as the way teachers will be evaluated, teacher pay being based on merit, and the removal of seniority as the key factor in staff reductions, will certainly add duties and stress to the jobs of administrators, especially building principals and assistant principals. There is a great body of research that indicates the success of students is directly related to the leadership abilities of the building principal. There are many challenges for our administrators, and a great deal of accountability. Our members show courage and leadership in their schools every day. However, with the bill eliminating the pick-up on retirement and potentially increasing the employee's contributions to healthcare, many administrators will actually incur a loss of wages. We will certainly experience a marked decrease in potential school leaders.

As an association, we urge you to eliminate this provision from SB 5 and allow boards of education to address this issue at the local level. If the intent of the bill is to give public employers more flexibility in how they spend, then why not give them the flexibility to decide if they want to offer this benefit to their administrators? As a former school superintendent who hired numerous building administrators, the STRS pick-up benefit was extremely beneficial in attracting, and retaining, the best possible candidates for my district and my students.

We support the reporting of this compensation as a method of achieving "transparency" in the discussion of administrative salaries. We urge the legislature to separate management from labor on the issue of employer-paid employee share of retirement contributions.

We are appreciative of your sponsorship of SB 5 and the leadership displayed during this emotional time. We hope you will consider our request to remove this provision from the bill. If you have any questions now, I would be happy to attempt to answer them. Please feel free to contact our association with any questions in the future.