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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Joint Education Oversight Committee

FROM: Ohio 8 Coalition Co-Chairs: David Romick, President, Dayton Education Association and Adrian E. Allison, Superintendent, Canton City Schools

CC: David James, Superintendent of Akron Public Schools; Pat Shipe, President of the Akron Education Association; Paul Palomba, President of the Canton Professional Educators Association; Mary Ronan, Superintendent, Cincinnati Public Schools; Julie Sellers, President of the Cincinnati Federation of Teachers; Eric Gordon, CEO of Cleveland Metropolitan School District; David Quolke, President of the Cleveland Teachers Union; Dr. Dan Good, Superintendent, Columbus City Schools; Tracey Johnson, President of the Columbus Education Association; Rhonda Corr, Superintendent, Dayton Public Schools; Dr. Romules Durant, Superintendent of Toledo Public Schools; Kevin Dalton, President, Toledo Federation of Teachers; Krish Mohip, CEO of Youngstown City Schools; Larry Ellis, President of the Youngstown Education Association

DATE: October 4, 2016

RE: School Transportation

The Ohio 8 Coalition appreciates the opportunity we had to share testimony before the members of the Joint Education Oversight Committee on September 22, 2016. We would like to be a continued resource for the committee as conversations related to school transportation move forward.

In that vein and as we shared within our testimony, below are our suggested solutions to the challenges Ohio public school districts face with regard to school transportation. The Ohio 8 Coalition believes that to craft a policy solution that is sustainable for the long term, all of these items must be addressed with the priority issue being the elimination of the mandate related to who controls the school bell schedules. We consider this our top priority.

1. Permit school district transportation departments to set and align bell schedules.;
2. Update the state excise tax reimbursement;
3. Gather a small group of school district student transportation directors from urban, suburban, and rural school districts to help craft detailed solutions to the challenges within this dialogue including but not limited to:
 - a. the realities of present day routing; that combines public and non-public school transportation;
 - b. the cost and use of payment in lieu of transportation;
 - c. the significant gap between state contribution and district expenditure over time;

- d. funding transportation inside or outside of the funding formula;
- e. challenges and costs related to replacing aging bus fleets; and
- f. policies related to special education student transportation.

School transportation is an issue The Ohio 8 Coalition first testified about in 2012 and has continued to do so before every relevant committee in both chambers every year since then. We are charged with getting students to and from school (regardless of where they attend school) safely and in an efficient and timely manner. We want to provide children the best service possible. As we have discussed with legislators for years there are several policy and operational barriers that prevent us from doing what is best for kids. From our concerted effort on this issue, we know that this is something all schools – rural, suburban, urban, traditional public or public charter schools – agree upon.

This is not a simple issue. Periodically pieces or parts of this problem have been addressed within various legislative packages. While we appreciate those attempts, they have just nibbled around the edges, injecting a few dollars here and there, or moving transportation funding in and out of the formula, but never getting to the root of this issue. We need a long term, sustainable solution for all children.

We appreciate you taking the time to hear testimony from The Ohio 8 Coalition and we look forward understanding next steps for the committee as it pertains to school transportation policy, specifically if additional testimony will be heard or if recommendations will be made to leadership in each chamber and caucus.

The Ohio 8 is a strategic alliance composed of the superintendents and teacher union presidents from Ohio's eight urban school districts – Akron, Canton, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Toledo and Youngstown.

The Ohio 8 Coalition's mission is to work with policy makers to improve academic performance, increase graduation rates and close the achievement gap for urban children throughout Ohio. The Coalition carries out its mission by working closely with legislators, educators, parents, labor and community officials. The Coalition brings a shared administrator-teacher voice to help shape state education policy.