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An Ohio "Excellent" Rated School ~ 2003 National Blue Ribbon School

The Honorable Cliff Hite
Senate Building
1 Capitol Square, Ground Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43215

12/9/2012

Subject: HB 555

Dear Senator Hite,

First of all, as elected members of the Kalida Board of Education, we applaud the legislature willingness to develop a new school district report card. Under the current policy, Ohio's public school districts are given a rating from "Academic Emergency" to "Excellence with Distinction." With HB 555, the system changes to an A to F rating. We appreciate your efforts to make the rating system easier to understand.

The new rating system should be a mechanism to accurately communicate the performance of Kalida Local Schools. While we believe the new rating system has some good points, we also believe the HB555 has some negative points which should be reconsidered.

- Making this rating system change within the current school year does not make sense. Changing the rules in the middle of the game only leads to confusion. Our focus for this year should be on the education of children. Incorporating this rating system "midstream" could easily take the focus off the children. Allow the current system to finish the school year and start fresh in 2013-2014 school year.
- Once again, Kalida BOE is very concerned about the unfair playing field between public and non-public school system. It is a system designed to display failure for public schools. Private schools have the luxury of picking and choosing students who would be a "best fit" to meet their criteria. It is unfair to compare schools when public school populations vary so much.
- HB555 provides a dashboard for students being prepared for success. What exactly is meant by being prepared for success? HB555 appears to be heavily slanted in favor of students planning to attend a four-year college. With Kalida's diverse population, we need an appropriate assessment that measures students attending vocational schools or directly entering the workforce. Not all students are meant for college.
- A school or district with a lack of resources could receive lower grades because they don't have the necessary components to be graded. Examples are Advanced Placement classes and dual enrollment courses that are actually college level and should not be part of the new grading system.

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- HB555 makes changes to the report card related to proficiency test and district's rate of success for students passing the tests. Movement to the Common Core Standard is expected to result in a more rigorous content and an increase in the difficulty of the tests. We understand the need to set higher expectations. But should we not try to understand the net effects of the Common Core Standard first and then move to the dashboard?

In summary, we appreciate the legislature's efforts to continuously improve various elements of Ohio's overall school system, but it appears in general that many proposed changes are geared toward punishing public schools and directing more students and financial resources to private schools. If you look at schools like Kalida, our students consistently achieve at the highest levels, while our cost per pupil is among the lowest in the state. When drafting legislation that involves all schools, we simply ask that a stronger emphasis be placed on holding all schools to the same standards and requirements. We also ask that some positive focus be placed on the great things that small schools like Kalida consistently accomplish. Too often, changes passed that intend to fix problems in the larger urban districts tend to punish districts like Kalida.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our viewpoint.

Dennis Turnwald, Board President

Sue Gerdeman, Board Vice President

Greg von der Embse, Board Member

Nichole Niemeyer, Board Member

Gerry Vorst, Board Member