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**Senate Finance Committee
Amended Substitute HB 166 Interested Party Testimony
Cincinnati Public Schools
May 30, 2019**

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Burke, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the Senate Finance Committee: thank you for the opportunity to submit interested party testimony on behalf of Cincinnati Public Schools (CPS) regarding Amended Substitute House Bill 166, the biennial budget bill.

CPS is the best performing and fastest growing large urban school district in the State of Ohio, and your support is an essential aspect of this unprecedented growth. As you consider House Bill 166, we encourage you to consider key provisions of this legislation.

Support for Wrap-Around Services

CPS supports the proposed increased support for wrap-around services for students. As you're aware, CPS is one of the only districts that has a mental health partner in every school, as well as significant integrated health and social-emotional learning services provided through our nationally recognized **Community Learning Center** model, including 26 school-based health centers. These funds would invest in the social-emotional well-being of our nearly 36,000 students.

Graduation Requirements

CPS joins The Ohio 8 in supporting the graduation requirement changes proposed by Ohio Excels, the Alliance for High Quality Education and the Fordham Institute. We believe that high expectations, expanded educational offerings, and flexible pathways create opportunity for all students to succeed in their chosen career pathway – enrolled in college, enlisted in the military, and ultimately employed in the competitive workforce.

Report Card

As part of the General Assembly's holistic approach to improving the primary and secondary education system throughout the state, your work examining the efficacy of the current district report cards is critical. We are committed to supporting the Joint Oversight Education Committee as they examine and implement a district and school report card evaluation that truly reflects student achievement, performance improvement, and most importantly is understandable and transparent.

The CPS Board of Education recently passed a resolution calling for the repeal of House Bill 70 Academic Distress Commissions. We support the House changes to remove this requirement.

Pupil Transportation

Our district's budget for transportation has increased significantly over the last few years. As you are aware, CPS's transportation policy extends far beyond the state's minimum standards – CPS provides yellow bus service to all elementary public, parochial and charter school students who live one mile or more from their school, and covers the cost of Metro bus service for high school public, parochial and charter school students who live 1.25 miles or more from their school.

The current version of HB 166 includes a provision that would prohibit the district from reducing pupil transportation services once the school year has begun. As CPS analyzes what routes are efficiently and effectively utilized throughout the year, we believe we should retain local control of transportation decisions. For example, our transportation department created a route at the beginning of the 2018-19 school year to serve Roger Bacon High School; midway through the year, we learned only five students were accessing the route, and of those five, none were using it regularly. Instead of a dedicated route, we were able to provide Metro bus passes to the students so they could utilize the service when needed – without running a dedicated Metro bus that at times would be empty. Students, parents and Metro were pleased with this solution because it was efficient while maintaining student access to services when needed.

We also support the House's changes to give school districts more flexibility in transporting parochial and charter school students.

Residential Developer Tax Abatements

We oppose the inclusion of House Bill 149, which would provide tax breaks for housing developers by freezing the taxable value of their property for up to three years. The City of Cincinnati, as well as the other smaller cities and townships within the 91-square-mile CPS District, have local economic development incentives that are much more targeted to the needs of our area; we do not believe a statewide abatement is needed and we oppose the loss of any potential incremental revenue increases that would support our growing 65 school communities.

We are happy to answer any questions, and invite the members of the committee to visit us in Cincinnati. Thank you for your continued support of Cincinnati Public Schools.