

February 11, 2019

Governor Mike DeWine
Riffe Center, 30th Floor
77 South High Street
Columbus, OH 43215-6117

Dear Governor DeWine:

Congratulations on your newly elected position as Governor of the great state of Ohio. As a lifelong resident of Ohio, I am proud to represent the buckeye state and look forward to your successful tenure.

I know one of your goals is to ensure that all Ohioans have an exceptional education and that the children living in communities have the opportunity to live out their dreams and contribute to a great state and a great nation. Regretfully, I write to you to share that all of the children in my hometown of Lorain, Ohio are not being afforded the opportunity for a quality education because we are unable to function with an unconstitutional burden known as the Academic Distress Commission (ADC), which is a function of a poorly planned educational policy action known as House Bill 70.

Running for public office is not an easy venture. I chose to run for the school board in Lorain because I wanted to be a difference maker and contributor to the positive development of children in my city. As a duly elected board member, myself and the other elected board members have not been allowed to fulfill our obligation as school board members, after being elected by our citizens. The opportunity to run for public office and offer yourself to the community in which you live as a school board member is among one of the most American and democratic things any citizen can do. I write to you today to let you know that I am being denied my right to fulfill my role as an elected board member because of HB 70 and the Academic Distress Commission.

The Lorain City Schools have suffered immeasurably under the Academic Distress Commission. Our student performance is worse than it was prior to the ADC. Parents, citizens and community members are being denied an opportunity to hold their elected officials accountable. The ADC is a failed policy in Lorain and Youngstown. According to longitudinal research studies, state takeovers of public schools have been a failed strategy for details.

In addition to our poorer academic performance, perhaps the worse feature of the ADC is the unknown toll it has taken on our neighborhoods and community. As a city that's already struggling with replacing the steel mills which helped define this community for over a hundred years, we now have the difficulty of our once proud public school system currently performing at its lowest level in our history. The inability to exercise our constitutional rights by having the citizens that were elected by their fellow citizens unable to serve is not right. This unconstitutional measure is not what the United States of America was founded on and the ADC does not reflect what is in the best interest of Lorain. This is unacceptable and enough is enough.

As the new president of the Lorain City Schools Board of Education (the duly elected board members of our community), I am strongly encouraging you to eliminate the ADC and require the leadership at the Ohio Department of Education to pursue innovative and transformational strategies to help improve struggling school districts. I would like to request a meeting with your education policy leadership team and share more thoughts from all of the elected board members in Lorain. Please respond to my letter in the next 14 days as this is a very urgent matter.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. If you have any questions, please contact me 440.341.0402.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mark Ballard". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Mark Ballard
President
Lorain City Schools
Board of Education