



## Office of Representative Michele Lepore-Hagan 58<sup>th</sup> Ohio House District

January 25, 2022

Ohio Auditor of State  
88 East Broad Street, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Columbus, OH 43215

### **RE: Performance audit of schools implementing academic improvement plans (previously Academic Distress Commission)**

Dear Ohio Auditor Keith Faber:

Passed in the 131<sup>st</sup> General Assembly, [HB 70](#) required the Superintendent of Public Instruction to establish an academic distress commission (ADC) for certain school districts. Three school districts ultimately fell into the ADC model: Youngstown, Lorain, and East Cleveland.

While overseeing these local school districts, the ADCs were not required to provide financial information to either the elected board of education or broader public. Taxpayers and community members have been kept in the dark. To put it bluntly: these districts have very little idea how their ADCs spent public money.

After years of growing frustration and overwhelming evidence of the ADCs' failure to provide improved educational outcomes for children, advocates and lawmakers demanded the removal of their ADCs and restoration of local control and transparency to their respective school districts. Their voices were finally heard with the passage of [HB 110](#) in the 134<sup>th</sup> General Assembly.

HB 110 establishes a process by which these school districts, currently subject to an ADC, may be relieved from its oversight. Community stakeholders and partners developed and submitted three-year academic improvement plans to the state Superintendent as part of this process. All three districts' academic improvement plans were accepted as of [December 3, 2021](#). Now begins a three year or more evaluation by the State Board as to whether their respective academic improvement benchmarks are being met.

Furthermore, [O.R.C. Section 3302.103 \(B\)](#) now requires the auditor of state to complete a performance audit of these school districts one time during the three-year period of the plan and submit the results of the audit to the board of education of the school district and the academic distress commission established for the district. The information that will be made available as a result of these audits is of vital importance to our schools and the students they serve.

The effective date of HB 110 was June 30, 2021. While a pathway toward removal of ADCs and the acceptance of academic improvement plans are great progress toward restoring local control and

transparency, as well as improving student outcomes, it's been nearly half a year and our districts are still lacking all the necessary tools needed to aid in their recovery from this educational blunder.

That is why Representative Miller and I introduced [HB 112](#). Unlike a one-time audit that will take place at any moment over the three year academic improvement plan period, HB 112 would have required a performance audit within 90 days after the effective date of the legislation. This legislation is a response to the voices speaking loud and clear in our districts who want to do right by our children now and not waste another moment.

It is our request that you, too, heed their calls and conduct this very important audit as soon as possible. Please give these districts the information they need to best serve the students in their schools. Please don't let one more minute go to waste without shining the sunlight on taxpayer spending in Youngstown, Lorain, and East Cleveland school districts. Give this request, and by extension the citizens who have fought for years for this moment, your utmost consideration.

We, the undersigned, request your acknowledgment of receipt of this letter (by end of week, Friday, January 28, 2022). We request a formal response from your office (by end of next week, Friday, February 4, 2022). In that formal response, we ask that you provide information on whether you will or will not conduct a timely (defined as before the end of this school year) performance audit of Youngstown, Lorain, and East Cleveland school districts. We request a detailed timeline for when these districts can reasonably anticipate a performance audit from your office.

Sincerely,



**Representative Michele Lepore-Hagan**  
Ohio House District 58



**Representative Joe Miller**  
Ohio House District 56



**Kent Smith**  
Ohio House District 8

**134<sup>th</sup> General Assembly Committee Assignments**

Commerce and Labor, Ranking Member  
Health  
Transportation and Public Safety

**Contact Information**

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