

## Opinion: Bill helps students, despite Kasich



**Denise Driehaus** 11:11 a.m. EDT September 4, 2015

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In 2000, Cincinnati Public Schools did something revolutionary. For the last 15 years, students, families, and communities have been transformed by the success of Community Learning Centers (CLCs) in this city. CLCs transform a school into a hub of activity in the community, ensuring students and families are given the resources they need to be successful. They leverage public and private investments to provide health services, dental care, after school enrichment activities, early childhood educational opportunities and much more.

CLCs have increased the number of students who graduate from Cincinnati Public Schools and closed the achievement gap between white and African-American students. They have been instrumental in making Cincinnati the first urban school district in the state to achieve an “effective” rating, and kept Cincinnati as the top-rated urban district in the state year after year.

That is why I introduced House Bill 70, legislation that would have expanded the Community Learning Center model throughout the state of Ohio. I worked on this bill for four years. I had a co-sponsor from across the aisle. We brought in interested parties to provide feedback. We worked with our colleagues to ensure they understood and supported this bill. We developed a bill that passed out of the House with broad, bipartisan support.

That was House Bill 70. It was an 11-page bill that had the potential to transform communities throughout the state with an innovative, proven model for improving educational outcomes.

Then Gov. John Kasich got involved.

Over the course of 24 hours in June, with one last-minute public hearing and no opportunity for input from local communities, the Kasich administration attached a 66-page amendment to my 11-page bill, turning it on its head.

The Kasich amendment dictates a top-down approach to schooling where local control is ignored and a state-appointed CEO is given free rein over a school district deemed by the state to be in distress. This CEO can alter the curriculum, change the school calendar, and even dismantle the entire district. While I

understand the need to assist a school district in distress, I am certain that this is not the correct approach.

CLCs have worked in bringing Cincinnati to the forefront of education reform by engaging parents, teachers and community members, promoting collaboration, and allowing for significant local input in education.

But rather than empowering communities by using a proven model for success, the Kasich amendment dismisses community concerns and concentrates power in the hands of a state-appointed executive. This is the antithesis of the original bill.

Cincinnati's CLCs have garnered national recognition for the impact they have on students, their families and the entire community. It is my hope that the bad will not outweigh the good in amended House Bill 70 and that school districts across the state can embrace our Community Learning Center model to share in educational success and achievement by transforming the lives of students and communities.

Because, in the end, it should be about what is best for our kids.

