



Chairman Cupp, Chairman Patterson, and members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 166.

My name is Brian Neal. I am the Chief Executive Officer of the Cincinnati nonprofit organization, Accelerate Great Schools. Accelerate Great Schools exists for one reason – to ensure that every child, in every neighborhood in Cincinnati, has access to a high-quality K-12 education. Currently in Cincinnati, only 15% of children attend a school with an overall Ohio Report Card rating of A or B. Accelerate Great Schools is working to change this by partnering with community stakeholders and families to ensure that a quality education is available to ALL Cincinnati children, regardless of their income or zip code.

Accelerate Great Schools supports high-quality options across all sectors, including district schools, non-profit community schools and private schools. It is our belief that parents/caregivers should ultimately determine the best educational opportunities for their children. The common thread through these schools is a track record of helping underserved students succeed at high levels. Since 2016, Accelerate Great Schools has invested more than \$7.3 million in seven schools: two Cincinnati Public schools, four inner-city Archdiocesan schools, and a nonprofit community school. In addition, we've invested more than \$1.4 million to build a diverse and talented pipeline of teachers and principals for district schools, nonprofit community schools, and parochial schools.

Our goal is to continue to increase the number of high-quality schools available to ALL Ohio children and families. Accelerate Great Schools believes Governor DeWine's budget provides several opportunities to support quality educational options for deserving Ohio families. We encourage you to support these opportunities as you work to crystallize HB 166.

Community School of Quality Funding:

Accelerate Great Schools supports high-quality school options with a proven track record in helping underserved students achieve at high levels year after year. A significant barrier for the expansion and sustainability of these successful Ohio-based and top national community school operators who desire to serve Ohio students has been Ohio's low per-pupil reimbursement rate for community schools. Governor DeWine's proposed funding for "Community Schools of Quality" is a big step in the right direction as it seeks to provide support for proven community school models that are helping underserved students succeed. For this reason, Accelerate Great Schools supports Governor DeWine's funding recommendations for high-quality community schools.

EdChoice Income-Based Expansion:

Accelerate Great Schools has seen the power of a high-quality parochial education to change the lives of students and families in underserved communities with few options. For many families who have chosen private school options for their children, EdChoice provides a much-needed lifeline in supporting a number of inner-city private school opportunities. Accelerate



Great Schools supports Governor DeWine’s proposal to support the expansion of EdChoice in providing additional opportunities for deserving Ohio families who seek quality private school solutions.

Wellness Funds:

Finally, Accelerate Great Schools supports Governor DeWine’s focus on providing additional resources to support wellness and success of our most vulnerable students. These resources could provide an opportunity to help address many of the significant challenges underserved students face every day in schools and lessen the burdens that many families are wrestling with in their homes.

Chairman Cupp, Chairman Patterson, members of this subcommittee, thank you again for the opportunity to provide this testimony. I will look forward to working with all of you to ensure ALL Ohio children have access to the high-quality learning opportunities they deserve.