



Testimony – HB 64

Good afternoon Chairman Cupp, Ranking Member Phillips, and members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education. Thank you for providing me the opportunity to testify today on House Bill 64.

My name is Matt Verber, and I am the State Policy Director for StudentsFirst Ohio.

House Bill 64 contains a lot of great provisions related to charter school accountability that would help provide every Ohio student with the ability to attend a high-quality school of her choice.

To begin with, the bill empowers the Ohio Department of Education to approve, evaluate, and publicly rate all charter school sponsors. By evaluating the sponsors and holding them accountable for student outcomes, Ohio provides an incentive for the sponsors to make better decisions, provide greater oversight and assistance, and be more selective in working with operators.

In addition, the bill eliminates many potential conflicts of interest between charter schools and sponsors, including a prohibition on sponsors selling goods or services to the charter schools they oversee.

In order to provide every Ohio child with a quality public education, funding levels should be sufficient to reach the goals of the education system and consider the varying needs of the students attending each school. Low-income students often need additional services and supports to achieve their best, and areas with high concentrations of poverty typically lack the community supports and financial resources of middle or upper-class areas. Therefore, we support the changes to the funding formula that provide additional funding to lower-income districts with less ability to raise local revenue.

StudentsFirst has some concerns regarding the teacher evaluation provisions. First, the bill repeals the contingency that accomplished teachers must have average or higher student growth scores in order to not receive a full evaluation. Also, the bill repeals the requirement that evaluators must conduct at least one observation of and hold at least one conference with accomplished teachers in the years they do not receive a full evaluation. At this time, accomplished teachers receive a full evaluation once every three years, and these provisions would deprive accomplished teachers of important feedback that could help them continually improve their instruction in the years they do not receive a full evaluation.

HB 64 allows schools using the alternative evaluation framework to choose one of the following components for up to 15% of the teacher evaluation: student surveys, teacher self-evaluations, peer-review evaluations, student portfolios. StudentsFirst recommends providing districts with greater flexibility by allowing them to choose more than one of those components for up to 15% of the teacher evaluation.

Lastly, the bill requires schools to measure student growth according to guidance issued by ODE if assessments are not available for the grade or subject. ODE's recent testing report recommended using shared attribution for these teachers. Instead, districts should be given greater flexibility in determining how to measure student growth for these teachers. Districts could design a measure that helps teachers improve their instruction without adding unnecessary testing.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my testimony. I am happy to answer any questions that you may have.