



Testimony in Support of Charter Facilities

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 Claire Powell. I am a retired elementary school principal from Berea, Ohio and a member of StudentsFirst Ohio. I am here in support of the public charter school facilities provisions of House Bill 64.

Every child deserves a quality public education regardless of the type of public school he or she attends. Providing public charter schools with access and funding for facilities empowers parents by ensuring they have quality school choices for their children.

Currently, most public charter schools in Ohio face significant obstacles when trying to construct, purchase, or lease suitable facilities. Public charter schools do not enjoy the same favorable lending terms as traditional school districts and are not automatically provided with space. As a result, public charter schools are often forced to settle for less-than-ideal spaces for their students to learn in, such as former stores or office buildings.

House Bill 64 increases the per pupil funding for public charter school facilities from \$100 to \$200. In addition, the bill creates a \$25 million state facilities fund for public charter schools with sponsors rated exemplary.

Facilities programs for public charter schools can have broad benefits for neighborhoods and cities. For example, Washington, D.C.'s programs have allowed public charter schools to successfully attract private investment to neighborhoods that was not otherwise available. By renovating underutilized or blighted buildings, public charter schools helped revitalize neighborhoods and attracted new residents and businesses. As such, financing charter school facilities doesn't just help students; it helps entire communities. Additionally, allowing public charter schools to purchase surplus facilities can be a revenue source for a financially struggling school district.

My own experience supports a case for ensuring public charter schools have access and funding for facilities.

I know this due to my past service on two charter school boards over the last 6 years. (I am currently serving on a different charter school board at the present time.) While I was president of one of the previous charter schools, the board was involved in a very lengthy process to obtain funding to purchase the charter school building from the management company. The second charter school had to be closed due to a number of factors, including decline in enrollment. Both of these charter schools served a population of students that do indeed need to be educated in school facilities that are less crowded and more able to meet the needs of the children who attend these

schools. The schools offer smaller class sizes and more individual attention to each student's academic learning plan. Given these reasons, I feel that the process of obtaining suitable buildings for charter school should be a top priority in terms of having access to purchasing suitable building in neighborhoods where there is a need for parents and their children to have access to quality educational opportunities.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my testimony. I hope you support the public charter school facilities provisions of HB 64 to help ensure all Ohio kids, regardless of their zip code, have high quality school options.