



## **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.

I am Lianna Madigan, a kindergarten teacher at Cleveland College Preparatory School, part of the I CAN SCHOOLS network, from Cleveland, 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 currently teach kindergarten at a charter school located in an old Catholic school building in Cleveland. Our building is a K-8 building, but because there are not enough classrooms in the main building, the kindergarten classroom and Special Education rooms are held in a small converted convent house next door to the main building. Every day, my 5 and 6-year-old students have to walk back and forth from the main building to the building next door. We have one small bathroom for our students, and it is in disrepair. Our art teacher does not have his own room and is required to travel to the classrooms, which limits his ability to instruct our young, urban

students. We are not able to have a K-8 music program for our students because we do not have the necessary facilities or space to provide instruction. Our kindergarten building does not have central air, and in the warmer months because we go until the end of June in extended school year, it is very uncomfortable for students and teachers. Additional funds for improving charter school facilities would make the overall education of our students that much better.

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.