



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 Marshay Strong, a teacher from Chagrin Falls, 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 work at a charter school in Maple Heights, Ohio. Some students come to school and they have not eaten anything since they left school the day before. Some students do not have the best family life at home. Some students come with problems all of their own. But yet they come. They come to receive the education that they did not receive at their traditional public school – a rigorous education with structure that will set them apart from everyone else. Our public charter school provides a quality education that does not cost any money to receive.

Our students have different backgrounds, and no matter the background they all just want to be

loved – shown they are loved and taught how to love unconditionally because they may not see it at home. With this love comes a quality education that they are welcoming most of the time without fighting the teachers.

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.