



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 Elyse Giardullo, a Student from Dayton, 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 attended Yellow Springs High School, an extremely small public school, with a meager 80 students in my graduating class. Yellow Springs High School was fortunate enough to have adequate funding for facilities. However, the quality of education I received wasn't as great. Perhaps if my parents had had more school choices for me, such as a nearby charter school, I could have had a much different high school experience. It is extremely important for all students to have quality school choices. Quality schools, in part, means having access to funding for facilities. It is unfair that charter schools do not receive the same funding per student that traditional public schools receive. Most importantly, we want all schools in Ohio to be successful. In order to ensure this happens, we must support the public charter school facilities provisions of HB 64.

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.