



David Leland
State Representative

Sponsor Testimony – House Bill 220

Good Afternoon Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair Slaby, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Education and Career Readiness Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on HB 220, legislation that will improve charter school transparency and accountability by permitting the state auditor to track all taxpayer money received by private, for-profit schools. This legislation is particularly relevant in light of the editorial in Sunday's Columbus Dispatch revealing that, between 2000 and 2016, the state's largest electronic school -- ECOT -- paid nearly \$200 million in management fees to for-profit companies owned by ECOT's founder.

Ohio taxpayers deserve a full and complete accounting for every one of their hard-earned dollars invested in education, whether the money is directed to public school districts or charter schools. Charter schools and their management companies shouldn't be able to hide their spending of any of the public funds they receive behind closed doors. This bill will close a loophole in state law and help ensure charter schools in Ohio operate in a transparent, accountable manner. Given the fact that Ohio is in the middle of an almost one-billion-dollar budget shortfall, it is now more important than ever to make sure taxpayer dollars aren't wasted or misused.

HB 220 clarifies that money charter schools receive from the Ohio Department of Education are public funds, and remain public even in cases where charter schools use the taxpayer dollars to pay management companies to oversee daily operations regardless of the amount. The state funds charter schools receive would be subject to the same requirements related to permissible expenditures and auditing by the state auditor as state funds allocated to public school districts.

In 1851, Ohioans rightly recognized that the right to a through and efficient education for all of Ohio's children was so important, --that they made that guarantee part of our Ohio Constitution. Today, it is clear that the success of Ohio...and quite frankly, of all America, is contingent upon a great education system. The only way to make that happen here is to make sure that ALL schools are accountable for ALL of the tax dollars they receive--- HB 220 will do just that!

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I look forward to taking your questions.