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Chairman Blessing,

I am contacting you today with my concerns regarding HB 87. My name is Dr. Richard J. Varrati, Ed.D. CEO of Quaker Digital Academy.

It appears as it is written that HB 87 is simply to provide the Ohio Department of Education with guidance on distributing funds as a result of a finding for recovery from the Auditor of State. I fear that this would only amplify the “us versus them” mentality that positions local districts against community schools when it comes to school funding. The rationale behind the state giving back money from a community school for alleged violations, and then returning that funding to a school district that never educated that student establishes a bad precedent. If a community school is not going to be paid for students it supposedly didn’t educate, then why should a district be paid for students it didn’t educate? Such a policy creates a double standard and does not have the students’ best interests in mind.

Community schools throughout Ohio often enroll students who are economically disadvantaged, bullied, have troubled pasts and face countless challenges. Often, these students were not able to succeed academically or fit into a traditional school environment and chose to or were directed toward alternative educational programs like Quaker Digital Academy. Quaker Digital Academy accepts these students knowing full-well that the student may have academic, emotional or physical issues and provides them with the educational opportunity and support. Nevertheless, Quaker Digital Academy designs academic programs to provide every opportunity to students and spend hours providing them services. In many situations this time is never documented in an FTE review and funding will likely be reduced back. Under this proposal, funding would be re-distribute back from Quaker Digital Academy or any community school and returned to the school district, despite that district failing to spend any resources educating the student.

Today, we have a school funding system that pits traditional school districts against community schools. We encourage leaders in this state to develop a school funding model that focuses on providing the best education for each individual student without discriminating between the types of public schools.

Thank you,

Sincerely,

Dr. Richard J. Varrati, Ed.D. CEO