

March 15, 2017

House Bill 49 Testimony

Chairman Cupp, Ranking Member Miller, Representatives Blessing, Patterson and Reineke,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you about the proposed 2018-19 education budget. My name is Beth Lear and I am here on behalf of the Ohio Coalition for Quality Education (OCQE). My background is 20+ years of legislative policy analysis and research, with most of that time focused on primary and secondary education issues.

The Ohio Coalition for Quality Education is the statewide organization for Ohio's public charter school system: their students, parents, schools and sponsors. One of our most important responsibilities is to empower parents with the knowledge that they have the right to choose the best education option for their children.

Nationally, there are nearly 7,000 charter schools, educating nearly three million students. In Ohio, the most recent data states there are more than 350 charter schools, educating over 116,000 public school students. Academically, Ohio's charter schools slightly surpass the traditional district schools from which they draw students.

Achievement Component

FIGURE 12

Ohio 8 Traditional Public School
Achievement Component Grade: 2015-2016

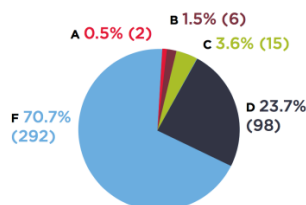
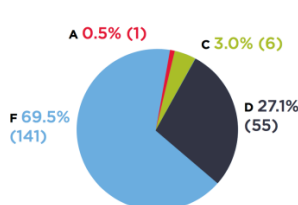


FIGURE 13

Ohio 8 Community School Achievement
Component Grade: 2015-2016



Source: ODE

When a similar-student model that includes poverty, mobility, special needs and English language learners is used to compare students, charters have been shown to have significantly greater academic gains. Unfortunately, even though House Bill 2 suggested examining this method, the department pushed back and will not utilize this valuable tool that ensures more accurate comparisons – the apples to apples perspective that we need - to go along with value-added.

Lastly, it's important to note the #1 reason parents choose charters: **safety**. An inner-city parent knows that public charter schools are not filled with guns, drugs and violence, and that is paramount for them!

We come before you today to ask that you consider a couple of changes to Ohio's charter school law, specifically the sponsor evaluation regulations.

- Issue one

Charter school sponsors are state approved and play an essential role in Ohio's accountability system, providing oversight, monitoring and technical assistance to the schools they sponsor. As you know, recent charter school reforms have included creation of a sponsor evaluation system.

We are requesting you add a couple of minor changes in the budget to the sponsor evaluation system. We believe these adjustments maintain the fidelity and intent of the system while providing greater clarity of each sponsor's performance.

The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) annually evaluates charter school sponsors in three areas:

- 1) The academic performance of the schools they sponsor.
- 2) Their compliance with applicable laws and rules.
- 3) Their adherence to quality sponsoring practices.

State law requires that each of these three components be weighted **equally** in the evaluation. But when ODE recreated their own evaluation system, they did not follow that portion of the law.

Therefore, we are requesting that the statute be clarified so that the evaluation framework does not automatically lower a sponsor's overall rating to "ineffective" if a zero score is obtained in any one of the three categories.

Currently, if a sponsor receives a score of "zero" in one of the three categories in which they are evaluated, ODE's evaluation system automatically lowers the sponsor rating to "ineffective." This occurs even if a sponsor receives a perfect score in the other two categories. We believe this is inconsistent with the legislative intent in HB 2 and the statute as written, which requires that the three components of the evaluation be weighted equally, per ORC 3314.016(B)(6):

(6) The department annually shall rate all entities that sponsor community schools as either "exemplary," "effective," "ineffective," or "poor," based on the components prescribed by division (B) of this section, **where each component is weighted equally**. A separate rating shall be given by the department for each component of the evaluation system.

The consequences of receiving an "ineffective" rating are significant: Sponsors rated ineffective are prohibited from sponsoring additional schools and those rated ineffective for three consecutive years are subject to revocation of sponsorship authority.

- Issue 2

Secondly, we are requesting that the academic component of the sponsor evaluation system give equal weight to each school in a sponsor's portfolio, rather than weighting each school based on how many students it has (average daily membership – ADM). Using the ADM component gives greater

academic weight to schools with higher enrollment and less weight to those with comparatively lower enrollment.

For purposes of illustration, consider this simplified example of a sponsor with three schools: Under the current sponsor evaluation calculation, a large school with subpar academic performance and an enrollment of 1,000 students, for example, will carry more weight in a sponsor's evaluation than two schools whose combined enrollment is lower. This artificially distorts the picture of how the schools in a sponsor's portfolio are performing academically.

If the goal is to hold sponsors accountable and spur improvement, an academic performance calculation that weights each school in a sponsor's portfolio equally, rather than weighting higher enrollment schools more heavily than schools with lesser enrollment, would provide a more accurate measure of a sponsor's true performance in overseeing the schools it sponsors.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My colleague, Dwight Crum and I, are happy to take questions.