



March 22, 2017

Hello Chairman Cupp, Ranking Member Miller, and fellow members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education. Thank you for providing us with the opportunity to testify today on the K-12 education components of House Bill 49.

We are the Cleveland Education Compact, a district-charter alliance that is committed to improving education in Cleveland for all children. With over 20 participating members, including the Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD), the Breakthrough Charter Schools network, Concept Schools, Cambridge Schools and independent charters like Stonebrook Montessori and the new Global Ambassadors Language Academy, members of the Compact are inspired by the belief that we are stronger as a collective. We seek and, in some instances have already found, common ground between Cleveland's district and charter sectors.

My name is Samantha Kobbah, an educator who has worked at two different charter schools in Cleveland. I am with Lindsey Blackburn, the Project Manager for the Cleveland Education Compact. Also with us is John Zitzner, President of Friends of Breakthrough Charter Schools and Stephanie Klupinski from the Cleveland Metropolitan School District.

Our primary objective today is to introduce our unique alliance to this legislative body, offer ourselves as a resource, and provide our thoughts on HB 49. Education stakeholders tend to talk about district schools *or* charter schools as exclusive options with competing interests. Those of us who belong to the Cleveland Education Compact would prefer that the conversation center on the collective "schools." In Cleveland, as in many cities, districts and charters serve the same students and face similar challenges. By engaging with one another, we can eliminate barriers to collaboration and improve the ways we work together for the benefit of all students.

First we want to provide a bit of history on our Compact. In more than twenty cities nationwide, charter schools and districts have signed these oft-called "Gates" Compacts in recognition of the support we all have received from the generous Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The Cleveland Education Compact officially launched in 2016. We were asked by Gates to apply for a Compact grant thanks to the strides we'd already made in district-charter collaboration, as evidenced by the Cleveland Plan, which, as you know, was made possible by the Ohio legislature.

As part of the Cleveland Plan, CMSD shares levy dollars for each Cleveland student that attends one of the now 19 partner schools. In exchange, the test scores from those schools are rolled up in our district report card. Charters still get their own school report cards.

The Cleveland Education Compact is now an additional way in which CMSD can work with charters. So far, it has brought district and charter school educators together for professional development – for example, coaching them to work better with children burdened by emotional trauma. Other subcommittees focus on topics including special education, record sharing and pooled services. Our Compact is also working on establishing a unified health insurance pool for charter schools, which could result in substantial savings to our schools.

In recognition of our city's work, the Center for Reinventing Public Education (CRPE) will bring district and charter leaders from around the country to Cleveland on April 3-4, 2017 for a convening on Compact success and district-charter collaboration.

One of our primary areas of engagement in the Compact is policy. District schools and charter schools in Ohio are all public schools, primarily serving urban students.

With regard to the budget, we have a few comments.

On Per Pupil Funding:

Both district and charter schools struggle to obtain the funding needed to educate students. The Administration's K-12 School Foundation Funding Formula Simulation shows Cleveland Metropolitan Schools receiving a 3.6% increase in FY 18 and a 0.8% increase in FY 19. We ask that all inputs of the school funding formula, specifically calculations based on enrollment and valuations remain constant and that any tweaks to other communities do not negatively impact Cleveland residents. Residents of Cleveland passed a levy in the fall of 2016 and the levy was to simply continue operations, not add additional monies to the district. Cleveland valuation remains extremely low; while Cleveland is on the rise, valuation remains at a 25-year low. We implore the legislators to guarantee stable funding for CMSD to ensure the Cleveland Plan reforms that are taking hold, remain in place to benefit both CMSD and our quality charter schools.

On Sponsor Accountability :

Next, the Cleveland Education Compact applauds the legislature and the Ohio Department of Education for its recent efforts to improve sponsor accountability. The current evaluation system asks sponsors to verify school compliance with over 300 different items and treats them all as equally important. This can be an immense burden for both sponsors and charter schools. But health and safety items are far more important than others. We request adjusting the evaluation system so that the more important items receive more weight. Also, all sponsors, not just those rated as poor, should be able to read, review and respond to their evaluation prior to publication.

Thank you for all that you do for our state. We appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today and are happy to answer any questions you have about the Compact or Cleveland's public schools.