



**Ohio Senate Finance Committee
Primary and Secondary Education Subcommittee
HB 49**

Dear Chairman Hite, Vice Chairman Sykes, and subcommittee members.

My name is Daniel Trujillo and I am the School Administrator for Lighthouse Community School in Cincinnati. We have been sponsored by Cincinnati Public Schools since opening in the fall of 2000. I have been the School Administrator and Principal since January of 2005.

I entered this position with great reluctance. Charter schools in Ohio seemed to be in such disarray with many operating unethically and even illegally (according to news reports). I reluctantly accepted the position because of the fact that the school was a collaboration between Cincinnati Public Schools and Lighthouse Youth Services in an effort to minimize the catastrophic consequences of Jr High and Sr. High school students who are in the child welfare system. I knew that the boards of Cincinnati Public Schools as the sponsor and Lighthouse Youth Services as the affiliate organization would not allow the school to operate in any manner that would compromise the integrity of their respective organizations.

If one examines the history of Cincinnati Public Schools as a sponsor, they will find that Lighthouse Community School operates with exemplary compliance. It is the only school that has been sponsored by Cincinnati Public Schools for the entire 17 years. However because of the scoring rubric, and the fact that they currently only sponsor two schools, the overall rating was "Poor". The Quality Performance Rubric heavily favors large sponsor organizations over the traditional school district sponsors who sponsor one or two schools. A sponsor can get credit for having a school that is experiencing significant problems by demonstrating that they react to those problems in an effective way. Meanwhile a sponsor that doesn't have a school that is experiencing significant problems will not get credit because they have no evidence of responding to these non-existent problems. There is no credit given to sponsors that have "prevented" the mis-use of funds or unethical/illegal problems from arising. Furthermore, organizations that have sponsored schools with questionable ethics and serious mis-management of tax payer dollars are still allowed to exist. A sponsor with a 17



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year history of accountable schools with demonstrated clean fiscal and programmatic audits should be getting an "exemplary" rating instead of a "poor" rating.

I do not think that this was the "intent" of HB 2, however this is the "outcome" of the rubrics that were developed. In the end, the "outcome" is what matters. I would ask that you look at the histories of sponsors that were rated as "Poor" and compare them to the histories of organizations that have sponsored not just poor performing schools but schools with serious ethical and legal issues. You will find that only traditional school districts and an ESC were rated as poor.

I would ask that the General Assembly allow the sponsors that are rated as "poor" be able to continue sponsorship until the rubric can be developed and implemented in a way that produces outcomes that are reflective of the intent of HB 2, reflective of the quality oversight by district sponsors and reflective of the integrity of the schools that they sponsor.

I would also like to speak to the standards developed for measuring Drop Out Prevention and Recovery schools. As a community school administrator of 12 years, I have never had such limited access to information about the development of standards that would so negatively impact my school and the students we serve. I have not been invited to workgroups or notified of any meeting regarding the development of these standards.

I was notified by email that 50% of our students needed to take the fall MAP tests and 75% of our students need to take the Spring MAP test. This notification came in February long after the fall testing window closed. Although we could use winter testing results, we had not tested students for the winter. We received an automatic "Does not meet standards" because we did not meet the percentage requirement. There are two problematic issues that arise from this.

First is the obvious fact that the rule was enforced retroactively where we were not given any prior notice.

Second, many of us who work in the Drop Out Prevention and Recovery schools understand that many students may enroll for two or three days, come back in a week for 1 day and then drop out. The likelihood that they will enroll in another school district is very slim because DOPR schools are the last line of defense in keeping students in school. The 75% participation rate has no bearing on how



well a DOPR school is doing academically. It is something that is necessary for the vendor to validate a test. The participation rate measures attendance and truancy. So if participation does not reflect student learning, why is it used in the standard? In a DOPR school, attendance does not reflect student achievement. Many students of working single parents will miss school to watch their younger siblings. Many are single parents themselves. In our case, we have a small school of 60 FTE students who are in the child welfare system. The youth are at high risk of running away. Yet we will enroll them knowing they may only attend a few days before they run away from their foster home again. I would ask that you advocate on the behalf of the DOPR schools to the vendor for a way to validate their tests without the 75% participation rate.

I do not question the "intent" of the staff at ODE. They are very knowledgeable, dedicated, and hard working professionals. They are diligent in their work to advance the quality of school choice. However, like all of us, we sometimes miss the mark when we are under-resourced and over-extended. I am asking for a slight correction or recalibration so that we can hit the mark. It is the impact of a few decisions that are in question. I have heard (although I can't remember the speaker's name) that true leadership requires the courage to be decisive, the humility to take ownership of decisions that do not work and the strength to make the necessary changes as difficult as they may be. I think that the staff at ODE meet these qualities. I ask that they be given a pathway for demonstrating the integrity of their department.

In closing I would like to thank you Chairman Hite, Vice Chairman Sykes, and subcommittee members, for your dedication to the improvement of our educational system and ensuring that the most vulnerable of our youth have hope for and access to a brighter future.

Sincerely,

Daniel Trujillo
School Administrator