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Chairman Jones, Vice Chair Manchester, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the Ohio House Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 549.

It is no secret that Ohio charter school operators have come under fire in recent years. While operators accused of wrong doing (like White Hat Management) may have left the scene, the environment that allowed bad operators to prosper still exists and it is incumbent upon us as legislators to ensure that the public dollars we invest in education are being efficiently utilized for that purpose. Unfortunately, that has not always been the case in Ohio and our taxpayers have suffered along with our students.

In a 2019 study that examined Ohio charter school failures, financial issues, mismanagement and fraud were among the chief reasons for charter school failures.¹ I believe we can help charter schools operate more efficiently and ensure the public's confidence in Ohio's charter schools by better ensuring transparency and accountability over the public tax dollars invested in these schools.

The bill that Rep. Manning and I have proposed helps our state do just that by ensuring that Charter Schools in our state are devoted solely to the education of our children by eliminating the profit motive from the current operating model. Our bill will redefine what schools will qualify for charter school funding by requiring that all charter schools be operated by a non-profit management company by no later than July 1, 2023. This bill would further require that charter schools identify who the non-profit operator will be well in advance of that date so that students and parents can begin make to make appropriate decisions on which school their child should attend. Removing the profit incentive from our education system is an important key to ensuring that public dollars are used for a public good like education because it will discourage the type of education speculators that may seek to profit from Ohio's current charter school model.

We can further ensure that the resources that we provide to schools are actually being utilized for educational purposes by opening up the records of charter school operators. This transparency and accountability is an important component to any recipient of public money. Currently, there is some confusion in Ohio law regarding what constitutes a "public record" when it comes to charter school operators. This bill, if passed, would clarify that the records of charter school operators will fall within the definition of public record. As a result these records

¹ Still Asleep at the Wheel: How the Federal Charter School Program Results in a Pileup of Fraud & Waste.
<https://networkforpubliceducation.org/>

will be subject to public scrutiny through Ohio's sunshine laws. This is an important mechanism to ensuring that public tax dollars used to fund charter schools are actually being dedicated to education and that charter schools are fulfilling their responsibilities to our children.

Our students deserve an environment that fully satisfies their educational needs. If we want our state to grow and for our communities to prosper, we must ensure that our education tax dollars are wisely spent on helping our students prosper. We can help them do that by ensuring that the public tax dollars sent to their schools are devoted to their education rather than their school's bottom line. I want to thank you all again for the opportunity to provide testimony with my joint sponsor Rep. Manning and I hope that you will give this bill strong consideration.