

Testimony on HB 166: Main Operating Budget for FY 2020-2021
Senate Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education
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Breakthrough Schools, Parent

Chairman Terhar, Vice Chair Lehner, Ranking Member Fedor and members of the Subcommittee; my name is Ricarło Winfrey and I am a parent of a Breakthrough Schools alumnus. My daughter, Alura Winfrey, attended Citizens Leadership Academy (CLA) for three years (6th, 7th, & 8th grade). I transferred my daughter from a private school to CLA because of the better academics provided by CLA. I remember when a teacher came to our house to interview us. She looked at my daughter and told her that if she ever appears to be doing just ok academically then she will provide more school work accordingly. That gave me a good feeling and indication of how serious the staff at CLA take education.

The entire CLA staff (administration and teachers) made sure that the students were prepared for what they would face as life happens. My daughter benefited and excelled because of their dedication to the students. Alura received various types of awards such as student of the month and was her graduating class' valedictorian. However, two distinctions stood out even more. One is that she was one of the selected few to attend an event where the speaker was then President Barack Obama. She was able to ask him a question which stumped the President and he had to think for awhile before giving his answer. After the event Alura actually met the President and he shook her hand telling her good job. The other stand out distinction was that Alura was selected to host a Breakthrough Bash. The Bash is the annual fundraising event. It was the first time that the students took over the Bash, and it was a great success. Alura was poised and mistake free as she hosted the event. Afterwards, many people expressed how well she spoke and some people wanted to give her a job. The confidence she displayed was inside her and brought forth by her positive learning experiences from Citizens Leadership Academy, a Breakthrough School.

Alura is currently finishing her Junior year of high school at Laurel School. Laurel School is recognized as one of the best high schools in the nation. She was able to attend this school because of her time at CLA. In addition to public speaking skills, she learned other important skills such as time management at CLA which helped her keep a high grade point average. CLA provided a strong foundation and culture that allowed my daughter to shine bright. Every child needs and deserves as many opportunities as possible to grow into his/her best selves. My daughter received that from CLA, so I plead with you to support the funding of high quality charter schools like Breakthrough Schools. Supporting Breakthrough Schools means supporting a higher quality education for the children. I also plead with you to support the funding for wraparound services so that all students can stand the best chance to receive their education.

Thanks.