

Testimony on HB 166: Main Operating Budget for FY 2020-2021  
Senate Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education  
Wednesday, May 8, 2019

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Breakthrough Schools, Parent

Chairman Terhar, Vice Chair Lehner, Ranking Member Fedor and members of the Subcommittee; my name is Andrea Catlin and I'm a parent of an alumnus of Breakthrough Schools. My daughter Ashley Hayden attended Breakthrough Schools K-8 (Citizens Academy, Citizens Leadership Academy). Some of her accomplishments while attending Breakthrough Schools included Citizen of the Month, Student Ambassador and Speaker at the 2017 Breakthrough Bash. She currently attends CMSD John Hay Early College High School. Although my daughter has graduated from Breakthrough Schools, we continue to be involved and supportive of a network that is dedicated to preparing Cleveland students for success!

I want you to know that Breakthrough Schools have made a difference in education in several communities in the Cleveland area. There were not a lot of options available when it was time for my daughter to enter kindergarten. Our family had invested in our community, built a home and had plans of our daughter attending a quality school. It was very stressful when deciding where she would attend school. It was important to find a school in our neighborhood that would provide a high quality education and meet our expectations. I learned about Breakthrough Schools from a close family friend and the school was about 5 minutes from our home. I didn't know much about Charter schools and was hesitant of the unknown and there was some resistance. But after meeting with the school and learning more about their mission is when the partnership began....a partnership between parents, teachers, staff and students.

So, I became very involved as a parent, member of PAC (Parent Advisory Council), Junior Prom Coordinator, POB (Parent of Breakthrough) board member assisting with enrollment and much more. Volunteering and advocating allowed me to learn more about why this school was so special. I realized very quickly that I made the right choice. Breakthrough Schools gave my daughter a strong foundation which gave her the tools she needed to be successful. They set the expectation to be successful and to strive for excellence. They also taught her balance, confidence and perseverance, and provided resources and support. She was inspired and empowered to learn. She was more than prepared to enter high school and continues to earn honor roll and will take college classes in the fall.

The results speak for themselves. They are closing the gap and deserve funding to continue their efforts to ensure that students in the Cleveland area receive a high quality education. That's why I wrote this testimony- to make sure that you understand how important it is that they get the support they need. Breakthrough Schools has earned the support of parents, staff and students...I am asking you to join the partnership and support the budget proposal to provide needed funding to support Charter Schools of Quality.

Not every charter school will qualify, and not every charter school should. But just as Breakthrough challenged and inspired my daughter to be a better student and think about college, this fund is specifically designed to inspire other charter schools, including Breakthrough, to strive to meet the high quality definition.

I also support the inclusion of funding for “Wraparound Services” which can be accessed by charter schools. These are critical funds that can address the entire wellbeing of the children most in need of support.

Thank you for your consideration.