



Dayton Early College Academy

May 9, 2019

Chairman Terhar, Vice-Chairwoman Loehner, and members of the Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education, I am grateful for the opportunity to testify before you this morning. My name is Dave Taylor, and I am the Deputy Superintendent of the Dayton Early College Academy (commonly known as DECA), a network of charter schools in the city of Dayton. Our three schools serve over 1,200 students K-12 in Dayton, or about 5% of the city's children, with a singular focus on helping them gain the skills they need to go to and graduate from college. Our schools overwhelmingly serve children who are underrepresented in higher education: three quarters of our students are considered economically disadvantaged, 98% are children of color, and the vast majority will be in their family's first generation to graduate from college.

Too often in our country a child's zip code and skin color portend all need to we know about her academic and economic future. This is especially true in the city of Dayton where the majority of children live in poverty. Since DECA's inception as a Dayton Public school in 2003 and through our conversion to become a charter school in 2007, we have served as a choice for families in Dayton who are searching for a school that will challenge their children and support. Our schools are providing hope--a free and readily accessible school option--for families in our city who are bold enough to dream about the future their children deserve. DECA has consistently produced the highest performing schools in the city of Dayton on the Ohio State Tests, and 98% of our graduates go on to enroll in college. What's more, we boast a college graduation rate of 50%--that is 5x the national average for students of similar demographics. Since our inception, over 75% of DECA graduates have either graduated from college or are still enrolled.

I am encouraged by the Governor and Lieutenant Governor's recent budget proposal and their commitment to supporting Ohio's underserved children. I am further encouraged by substitute version of HB166 that the House recently released. We have been long overdue for real conversations about what is fair to all of the children in Ohio, and I am deeply grateful that you are tackling so many difficult issues with such a direct focus. One component of HB 166 that I would like to specifically urge you to support is the Quality Community School Support provision. This provision would provide charter schools that have consistently demonstrated their ability to outperform their home district and outpace the state's expectations for growth with the additional support we need to continue and expand the work that we're doing in Ohio's challenged school districts. The Fordham Foundation recently released a study that concluded that charter schools located in the Big Eight cities receive on average \$4,092 fewer dollars per pupil when compared to traditional district schools located in the Big Eight. Although this provision would not completely erase the delta that exists between traditional public schools and high performing charters' per pupil cost, it would make a significant dent in a way that would allow these charters to continue and even expand their work.

We have known for some time that poverty and student achievement are negatively correlated and while charter schools receive some additional funding to support our efforts to mitigate the impact of generational poverty, we know that the current funding levels are alarmingly insufficient to meet our children's needs. Simply put, it costs more

for us to do this work and to do it effectively. In our schools we act as surrogate parents to our students. We constantly run activities before school, after school, on weekends, over breaks, and during the summer to help students make up ground academically. We work diligently to ensure that we are equipping our students with the skills they need to interact socially and professionally. We ensure that every student in our schools completes college courses while they are in high school. We track them after they leave us to provide support as they move to and through college. We constantly work to improve our ability to understand our students' cultures, experiences, and values to ensure they are reflected in our curriculum and instructional practices. We labor to find teachers who are willing to consistently go beyond the expectations of what the typical classroom teacher is expected to do. We do all of these things and so much more because our kids--in fact every kid--deserves to go to a school that believes in them.

One might posit that it is unrealistic for charters to expect to receive as much revenue as traditional schools especially since charters were created in Ohio with the understanding that they would spark innovative practices at a reduced cost. The reality, however, is that education is a personnel-driven industry with some 80% of most districts' costs aligned to paying teachers, support staff, and other personnel. With urban charter schools receiving more than \$4,000 per pupil less in revenue on average than traditional urban public schools, we are forced to pay our teachers less, attempt to operate with larger class sizes, or skimp on the ancillary services we know children growing up in poverty need to address the opportunity gap facing them. At DECA we have worked to raise private money to ensure that we have all that we need, but we are still unable to match the pay of many of the Dayton area's school districts. In the end we often have teachers who leave us to take teaching jobs paying several thousand dollars a year more than what we're able to offer. This isn't right. Our kids deserve to have outstanding teachers just as much as a child from a wealthier suburb.

The reality is that brick and mortar charter schools have produced academic results on par with or better than their traditional public school counterparts. And we've been doing so at a significantly lower cost to the taxpayer. We recognize, however, that much of the work we're doing is unsustainable because of our reliance on our ability to produce private philanthropy just to keep the lights on.

Ohio has made a significant investment in charter schools. I'm asking that the state double down where we can see clear returns on that investment. At DECA and in so many other high quality charter schools our greatest ambition is to serve more children who are traditionally underrepresented in college and to offer them the opportunity to realize that they have the ability to be great. We ask that you honor the work that we are doing to ensure that the children we serve--children with the same potential but who are often not afforded the opportunities presented to students attending school in more affluent districts--are supported as they work to achieve greatness and return to invest in our community. With that being said I respectfully ask that you consider supporting Quality Community School Support provision introduced in HB 166.

I am grateful for the opportunity to share my thoughts with you. I again applaud your willingness to ask and answer the difficult questions surrounding educating our youth. I stand ready to help you in any way I may, and I would welcome any questions you may have for me.