



May 16, 2019

Good Afternoon Chairman Tehar, Vice Chair Lehner, Ranking Member Fedor and Committee members,

My name is Dave Cash, and I am President of Charter School Specialists. Charter School Specialists has partnered with St. Aloysius Orphanage to provide sponsorship oversight, monitoring, and technical assistance since St. Aloysius was approved to be a community school sponsor in 2005. St. Aloysius Orphanage is not only a high performing Community School Sponsor, having achieved Effective Status for the past three years, but also a large mental health facility located in Cincinnati that has served children and families in the tri-state area for 180 years. I have been engaged in community school sponsorship for 18 years, having my initial experiences with the Ohio Department of Education.

Today I come in support of HB 166. As a community school advocate I will specifically touch on a few of the provisions.

News articles, testimony before this committee, and statements from State Education Associations, traditional district superintendents, and even members of this committee all attest to the brokenness of the Local Report Card. The claims are that it is irrelevant, ignored and understood by few. The two groups in the state that cannot ignore the Local Report Card are Sponsors and community schools. For Sponsors the Local Report Card must be the key indicator of the academic performance of their schools and the fulcrum for decisions about closure.

For community schools, the Local Report Card is life or death. That was always the promise. If community schools don't perform, they are closed. It is shocking that there are 30 community schools on the chopping block to potentially close, while nearly everyone acknowledges that the Local Report Card is fundamentally broken.

Community schools are not for profit entities, they are 125,000 students divided up over 320 schools, being overseen by approximately 1600 board of education members around the State of Ohio. These schools make up a significant part of Ohio's public school system. A majority of community schools are also out-performing their traditional district counterparts.

Sponsors are charged with the critical responsibility of monitoring, oversight, evaluation, and technical assistance, and yet we are left

with a broken instrument to make high stakes decisions for these schools.

The House of Representatives has a timely solution that recognizes that our inner cities, the primary location for community schools, deal with high poverty and high mobility students and families. Growth in many cases is the most important of the report card metrics for these schools. Allowing schools to choose which metric should apply to them is hardly an attack on accountability. It is an application of flexibility, not altogether different than the State Superintendent discussed regarding graduation.

As a sponsor of community schools, charged by the State Board of Education and the General Assembly to oversee and gatekeep schools, our main purpose is accountability. We are absolutely in favor of strong accountability measures, but our current Local Report Card is neither strong nor accountable, it is simply ignored by the majority of our public education system, and a scourge to the rest. Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, I urge you to take action to support the changes proposed by the House or at the very least release community schools from this flawed set of metrics under the automatic closure provisions until a new report card can be created.

As broken as the General Population reports cards are, the report card for Drop Out Recovery Schools is worse still. The plethora of issues and barriers affecting the performance and efficiencies of these types of schools has not only been recognized by the House, but also by the State Board of Education who just recently created a Work Group to study the issues and make recommendations for improvement. I am encouraged that as a State we may begin to recognize the valuable work of these schools and address the barriers that have been established to curtail their effectiveness in redirecting drop out students in Ohio.

Additionally, the House addressed the coming issues with the removal of Long-Term Substitute Teacher Certificates. This type of certification does have its limited place in Ohio's education system, but with the current teacher shortages, it doesn't make sense to completely remove this option for schools.

Transportation remains a major concern for Community Schools. There are many variables that affect the viability of these schools, one of the-most frustrating being the yearly changes imposed by the traditional public district responsible for transporting community school students. Many community schools were affected this past year when Columbus City Schools decided to move their transportation registration system online. The issues that all the community schools had with this change greatly affected expected enrollment and funding for education. Schools

now have to allocate significant resources from their academic budgets to pay for supplemental transportation. The increase in funding to parents is helpful, but more should be considered to protect the education funds of community schools. I encourage the Senate to increase transportation funding to both districts and to community schools.

Facilities is another area of concern. Again, the House added a provision to prevent districts from holding on to facilities instead of offering them to community schools. Community schools only receive \$200 per student for facilities, when the market costs for facilities for these schools is significantly higher. Community schools must again dip into their general fund to pay for facilities, directing valuable resources away from education. Reusing school buildings that have already been purchased with tax-payer funds is an efficient way of using State funds. I encourage the Senate to consider increasing facilities funding for community school from \$200 per student to at least \$400 per student.

Community schools primarily must be located in high poverty, high mobility urban areas. As such most of the schools have free and reduced lunch rates of 90-100%. Traditional District Schools receive 100% of Targeted Assistance funding to assist with high poverty and high mobility students. However, when a parent chooses to move their student to a Community School, this amount is reduced to 25%. We have seen no indicators why Community school students in poverty would be worth less. We request that the Senate increase this funding to 100%.

Lastly, since the implementation of the Sponsor Evaluation System, nearly half of the 60+ sponsors have closed voluntarily or been closed by the Ohio Department of Education. The Ohio Department of Education reports that nearly 90% of all community schools are now under the oversight of Effective sponsors. Fortunately, having a robust evaluation system worked to separate out those sponsors that were performing from those that were not performing. Unfortunately, the Sponsor Evaluation System, which costs the State well over a million dollars to implement, continues to pick up steam. The Ohio Department of Education continues to add requirements and nuance, on to both sponsors and schools. Each year hundreds of hours of time are spent uploading thousands of pages of paper to the Department. The Department has a strong cohort of sponsors now, but the requirements to complete our work continue to increase and we are made to function with one hand behind our back. Sponsors initiated the Sponsor Evaluation System and wanted a vehicle to delineate performance. We have this vehicle, and the medicine worked. It is time to scale back the yearly requirement to a more responsible 5 year rotation for Effective sponsors.

Thank you for your time, I am available for questions.