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Charter schools serve a significant portion of students here in the state of Ohio. I will be speaking to you in broad terms with regards to funding disparities and sponsor evaluations, as well as specifics with regards to dropout recovery and prevention schools, as that is where I have spent my life's work and continue to do so.

A quick background about me. I know I stand before you here today, a 40-year old, married, mother to three sons who are all enrolled in our local public district, a volunteer in our community, with a career in advocacy that I could only have dreamed of when I was a child. What you don't see is who I was at 16 and 17 years old. What you don't see is a troubled youth who had multiple traumas from sexual abuse to drugs and even adjudication. What you don't see is the "at risk" (we prefer at-promise) teen, the one who I was told I would never amount to anything. The one who had everybody in life, outside of my family, give up on me. I was the students our schools serve. My passion lies in my experience firsthand, and I would be remiss if I didn't let you know that though my life has not been the easiest, the issues and traumas I went through pale in comparison to the countless students I have seen walk through the doors of dropout recovery and prevention schools. We serve students on average who are 18 to 19 years old, reading at a fourth grade level, coming to us with credits to barely be a freshman in high school, having tried at least three additional high schools, so far behind and with so many external factors impeding their ability to be successful in school. Our schools are the triage. We take the students and first have to address the issues and barriers they have in their lives before we can even begin to get them back on track academically.

Now that you know a little bit about me and a little bit about our average student I would like to touch on some specifics with regards to amendments pertaining to drop out recovery and prevention schools. It is of paramount importance that while the State Board of Educations work group is meeting to develop the metrics and alternative report cards for these specific schools that these schools be exempt from closure during this time period as well as for a time after to review and analyze impact and outcome. I am fortunate to have been chosen to sit on that work group along with many expert stakeholders specializing in dropout recovery and prevention, a specialized niche within the charter school sector, and I have strong faith that the resulting outcomes will be reflective of what can truly be used and measured to identify quality DORP programs.

While we are on the subject of dropout recovery and prevention report cards, there is a simple fix for the legislature with regards to test passage. Currently a student must receive 21 total points on the end of course exam in order for their school to "meet" the Test Passage metric, however, students only need 18 of the 21 in order to graduate, and it would be unthinkable to



hold a diploma from a student because there is an issue that we, the adults in the room, need to work out and realign to be effective and appropriate. Please support aligning this metric with the requirement for graduation.

Now, with less specificity to DORPs but of great concern and importance nonetheless, would be supporting an increase in funding for charter schools with regards to transportation, facilities, and an increase in targeted assistance funding from its current status at 25% of what the districts receive for serving these same economically underprivileged students. The notion that charters have less accountability and thus should be funded less is erroneous and disingenuous. Nobody is looking for absolution from accountability, nobody is asking for a lax approach to accountability, but what we are asking for is equitable funding so that we may continue to serve the students who choose charter schools as they are educational option, all while ensuring it is a quality option.

The final point I want to raise is with regards to sponsor evaluation. Our sponsors are our number one partner, we work together on everything from professional development, compliance visits, audits, student graduations, and countless other ways. While I understand the original intent of the sponsor evaluation, I don't understand is why sponsors must be evaluated yearly once they have been rated effective or exemplary. This annual monitoring makes them effectively have to take the focus away from helping us serve the students of Ohio, and just become paper pushing compliance machines, uploading thousands of documents in a short time, depending on the number of schools they sponsor. Again, we are not asking for a lack of accountability, but a more utilitarian approach to this accountability system, going from an annual review process to a five-year review process for sponsors who have completed three years of reviews with results of effective or exemplary.

I want to extend my sincerest thanks to all of you for allowing me to come here and share a little piece of why I fight so hard for some of Ohio's most vulnerable student populations. Each and every day I get to see students that most have written off, and each day that they are in a school that really sees who they are inside, they break a little bit more free from what or who they've been told they are, and a little closer to who they know they can be. Thank you again for your time if you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact myself or anybody in my organization. We would love to have any of you come to visit one of our schools, anytime.

Respectfully yours,

Cris Gulacy-Worrel, VP Development and Advocacy

