

May 4, 2023

Good Afternoon Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, and Ranking Member Ingram and members of the Senate Education committee.

My name is Dave Cash, and I am the President of Charter School Specialists. Charter School Specialists works in partnership with St. Aloysius Orphanage providing sponsorship oversight, monitoring, and technical assistance to schools they sponsor. A community school sponsor since 2005, St. Aloysius also operates a large mental health facility in Cincinnati, serving children and families in the tri-state area for 180 years. St. Aloysius Orphanage earned a rating of 'exemplary' based upon performance as measured by Ohio's sponsor evaluation system. I have been engaged in community school sponsorship for 22 years.

As a community school sponsor and advocate, I'm offering proponent testimony for amendments we would respectfully ask the Senate to consider and accept as part of HB 33, the State Operating Budget.

Eight years ago, Ohio had 65 community school sponsors. Most of these sponsors were school districts and outside of the Ohio Department of Education's purview, thus little oversight. The Ohio Association of Charter School Authorizers initiated and was joined by the Ohio Department of Education to create a sponsor evaluation tool. This tool, though flawed, did effectively remove sponsors that were not performing up to appropriate standards. We now have 19 sponsors that are all highly rated as Effective or Exemplary. St. Aloysius is an Exemplary sponsor. As there are no Poor or Ineffective sponsors it is necessary to modify the evaluation tool to ensure that sponsors continue to perform at these higher levels while reducing their bureaucratic burden. The Ohio Association of Charter School Authorizers is supporting a modification to the sponsor evaluation system to include the submission of a portfolio of work. Each sponsor would collect evidence of their quality work and submit that work to the Ohio Department of Education every five years. The Department would ensure that this portfolio was submitted but not evaluate each submission. These portfolios would become a public record. The Ohio Department of Education is encouraging sponsors to provide higher levels of professional development to our schools and this change would significantly help to reallocate our resources.

The Ohio Quality Community School Grant fund was established to incentivize quality schools. The criterion for receiving this incentive is performance on the Local Report Card. Ohio's Drop Out Recovery Schools have a separate Local Report Card which wasn't included in the criteria for the grant, thus these schools are excluded from the grant. There are 77 Drop Out Recovery Schools around Ohio, serving a total of 16,000 students. It is of the utmost importance that Ohio incentivizes all of the best schools who serve our students, not just a select few. We seek to allow Drop Out Recovery Schools that meet the highest rating on the local report card: Exceeds Standards, to be able to apply for this grant.

Next, I would like to address what is currently the Online Drop Out Recovery School Pilot Funding model as found in HB 123 which was signed into law in December 2020 during the 133rd General Assembly. The pilot has been in operation for the past two years and has adequately addressed the issues of providing sufficient funding to serve dropout and disadvantaged youth across the state. The Ohio Department of Education has completed their review and is supportive of making this funding model permanent for all such schools. We support making the HB 123 Pilot Funding Model permanent to ensure necessary funding levels continue.

I would encourage the committee to recall the multiple news articles regarding transportation published this past fall. The articles made it appear to some that transportation issues are new. The reality is that transportation is a recurring issue for charter and charter non-public schools. The pandemic made the issues worse but did not create them. Every year the districts have software, management, personnel issues, or just refuse to transport our students counter to the provisions in Ohio Revised Code 3327.01. Two years ago, in an effort to resolve these issues, the General Assembly specifically made the Ohio Department of Education responsible for ensuring that the districts provide adequate transportation for our students. The law allowed the Department to withhold funds, which occurred for two school districts and then lawsuits ensued and little changed. It is extremely difficult for schools to ensure academic performance of their students if the State can't ensure that the students have adequate transportation to school. We support three provisions that we believe will address, in part, the transportation challenges our schools face. First, the establishment of a collaborative transportation grant allowing community schools to work together to establish their own transportation within communities, regions, and across the state. Second, establish a fund/grant to allow reimbursements to Drop Out Recovery Schools for transportation costs. These schools almost exclusively utilize the public transportation system as the students are older and attend school at alternative times. The Drop Out Recovery Schools have utilized funds provided for education to pay for transportation, even though Ohio Revised Code 3327.01 envisioned that they would have transportation provided.

The following are additional issues that need legislative attention.

- A. Industry Credential Only (ICO) pathways—Provide full FTE category 1 funding for all industry credentials (*adding up to 12 points*), regardless of current category level, that are done "in-house" in a DORP school. (HC_0318).
- B. Allow CTE funding in year one for DORP programs associated with Career-Technical Education. (g_135_0069)
 - a. Remove requirement for Community Schools to have to get sign off on their career tech plans.
- C. Remove cap for *Exemplary Sponsors* on number of schools they can open and allow them to open one E-School per year.
- D. Any changes made to the sponsor evaluation system used to evaluate Ineffective and new sponsors shall be submitted to JCARR for review.

- E. Clarify that community school governing authority members and employees are not subject to training developed, provided, and certified by the attorney general under ORC 109.43 because they are not elected officials.
- F. Added provision to ORC 3314.015 that eliminates the ability of the Ohio Department of Education to promulgate rules related to probation of sponsors. Essentially, keeps the Ohio Department of Education in line with provisions of statute allowing them to place a sponsor on probation instead of adopting rules for probation which are not supported by statute.
- G. Remove multiple facility requirements in ORC 3314.05 for community schools. They are unnecessary due to restriction on community schools be located in challenged districts being lifted.
- H. Remove additional requirement of comprehensive plan in ORC 3314.03(B). All elements of this are already included in ORC 3314.03(A) which is the entire charter contract.
- I. Allow for a sponsor to place a school in suspension in the future, instead of only immediate suspensions as required by ORC 3314.072.
- J. Remove requirement of sponsor expenditure reporting in ORC 3314.025. Quality review of SES reviews a sponsor's allocation of resources, and this is sufficient.
- K. Remove the requirement for monthly residency verification by school boards.

Lastly, we are grateful to Senator Reynolds for her efforts on SB 79 and would be supportive of seeing these provisions included in the State budget.

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