



Chairman Brenner, Vice-Chair O'Brien and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for allowing me to speak today. My name is Mark Michael. I am the Vice-President and General Counsel of Summit Academy Management. Summit Academy Management, also referred to as "SAM", is a nonprofit community school management company that operates 24 community schools throughout Ohio serving the educational needs of approximately 2000 students.

Our educational program and curriculum are designed to be a safe haven for children with learning challenges such as Autism, ADD, and ADHD. Over 70% of our students receive special education services. Our program, special services, highly skilled staff members and special programs such as Therapeutic Martial Arts, all work to create a positive, encouraging, and helpful environment for our students. With me today is Tim Cassell, with Governmental Networking. We are here to speak in support of proposed language in the budget bill regarding the Quality Community School Support Program and School Transportation and to seek additional language that would benefit our students and schools.

Under the Quality Community School Support Program, a "Community School of Quality" may receive up to \$3000 for each student that is identified as economically disadvantaged and up to \$2250 for each student that is not identified as economically disadvantaged. In order to receive the Community School of Quality designation, a community school must, among other criteria, have received higher performance index scores than the school district in which it is located on the two most recent report cards.

Community schools with a majority of students receiving special education services face a serious disadvantage in meeting the performance index score requirements. The schools in the districts they are competing against have far fewer percentage of students receiving special education services. This does not allow an "apples to apples" comparison of performance index with the districts. Summit Academy Management is seeking language that would allow the performance index of a community school with a majority of students receiving special education services to be compared to the performance index score of the district's students that receive special education services. In performance index, most of our schools outperform the district's comparable population of students. If this proposal is used, approximately 2 of our 24 schools would receive the designation after application of the rest of the criteria. A majority of the rest of our schools are close to meeting the criteria. Allowing an apples-to-apples comparison of performance index will allow a community school with a majority of students receiving special education services that is outperforming the district where they are located to receive the Community School of Quality designation.

The second area we would like to speak in support of proposed changes to Section 4511.76 of the Revised Code regarding School Transportation. The proposed changes will allow resident districts to use vans to transport students to and from regular school sessions.



Currently, districts must use yellow buses for that service. The number of students on a route to a community school typically do not fill a yellow bus. Yellow buses are more expensive, more expensive to operate, with a shortage of drivers qualified to drive them. Allowing the use of passenger vans will make it more economical for districts to transport students to community schools and easier to find qualified drivers. This last year, one of our schools lost approximately 10 students at the beginning of the year due to a lack of district provided transportation. We believe this proposal is a great step to address the school transportation challenges that exist across the state. Summit asks that additional language be considered to allow community schools to use passenger vans or contract with outside vendors where the community school provides regular transportation service to and from school.

On behalf of Summit Academy Management, thank you for the opportunity to testify on these matters.