



**UNITED SCHOOLS**

FOR EVERY CHILD, AN OPEN DOOR.

**Andrew Boy, Founder & CEO, United Schools  
Testimony before the House Education Committee  
March 5, 2025**

Chairwoman Fowler Arthur, Vice Chairman Odioso, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today as a proponent of the state operating budget, House Bill 96. I am Andrew Boy, the Founder and CEO of United Schools in Columbus, Ohio.

United Schools is a locally grown nonprofit charter school network, authorized by the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, serving kindergarten through 8th-grade students in Columbus. This year, we are proud to serve nearly 900 students, and we are preparing to welcome even more next year as we expand in three of the most under-resourced neighborhoods in our capital city.

Our students are remarkable. About 90% of them identify as people of color, 19% have identified disabilities, and nearly 100% are considered economically disadvantaged. But these numbers don't tell the full story. Every single one of our students is a bright, creative, and unique individual who deserves access to an outstanding public education, no matter their zip code. At United, we are committed to providing that opportunity.

Through a focus on academic excellence, intentional student supports and interventions, regular homework, and advanced coursework, we ensure that every scholar at every level has the tools they need to thrive.

United has consistently delivered strong academic outcomes. Our Elementary students outscored neighborhood schools in every subject area by up to 33 percentage points. Ninety-six percent (96%) of authorized United alumni in the high school class of 2024 graduated within four years of enrollment.

United does more than close the achievement gap for low-income and high-need students. We open their minds to learning - with discipline and mutual respect - and give

students the life skills to gain entrance, gain success, and gain a degree from the most demanding high schools and colleges.

These results are a testament to the hard work of our students, the dedication of our teachers, and the support of our families.

Yet the success of our schools has not come without significant financial hardships. Like many high-quality charter schools across Ohio, charter public school students are not funded at the same levels as their peers who attend other public schools. This funding disparity has forced us to make difficult choices—whether it's delaying investments in technology, struggling to offer competitive salaries to our staff, or relying on community support to maintain our facilities. While we have done everything in our power to shield our students from the impact of these funding gaps, the reality is that it is becoming increasingly difficult to keep pace with the rising costs of running a public school.

We are grateful for the investments that you and your fellow lawmakers have made in public education, including charter public schools, over the past budget and legislative sessions/cycles. And we are deeply grateful for Governor DeWine's commitment to support high-quality charter schools like ours in his proposed budget. This year's proposed budget includes three key provisions that would provide much-needed support to public school students attending charter schools like ours.

First, the Governor's proposed increase in charter school facilities funding from \$1,000 to \$1,500 per student is a step in the right direction. While it still falls short of the estimated \$2,000 per student needed to address our facilities' challenges fully, we appreciate that the Governor and Legislature have increased investments so that we can provide safe, welcoming, and high-quality school facilities to our students..

Secondly, high quality charter schools in Columbus currently receive, on average, 15% less funding per student than their district counterparts. This disparity limits our ability to invest in the resources and opportunities our students deserve. While the Governor's budget proposes the charter equity supplement at \$650 per student, we are asking that you help close the gap by increasing the charter equity supplement to \$1,000 per student. This additional funding would allow us to better support our teachers, invest in classroom priorities, and provide the high-quality education our students need to succeed.

Thirdly, please support the Governor's proposal to memorialize key funding streams—such as the charter equity grant, the charter facilities fund, and the high-quality charter grant—from a budget line item to statute would provide greater stability and predictability for schools like ours. These funds are instrumental in helping us serve more students on our waitlists and continue providing a high-quality education.

Knowing we can count on these funds from year to year ensures we can make critical investments; such as, reducing student-teacher ratio for students with disabilities, curriculum investments, PD, leadership pipeline sustainability, and more, that directly benefit our students.

In addition to addressing funding disparities, we believe it is critical to maintain high standards for school performance and accountability. At United Schools, we hold ourselves to the highest standards because we know that our students deserve nothing less. We support efforts to ensure that academics play a greater role in charter sponsor evaluations, and we strongly oppose any attempts to weaken the laws that require consistently low-performing charter schools to close. Accountability is essential to ensuring that all students in Ohio have access to a high-quality education, whether they attend a district school or a charter school.

In closing, I want to reiterate my gratitude to this committee for your commitment to all of Ohio's students. The work you do has a profound impact on the lives of children across our state, and I am honored to have the opportunity to share my perspective with you today. I urge you to support the Governor's proposed initiatives for charter schools and to consider additional measures to address funding disparities and uphold high standards of accountability.

Thank you for your time and dedication to Ohio's children. I welcome you to visit our schools and meet our extraordinary students and staff. In the meantime, I am happy to answer any questions you may have for me today.