



Ohio's State Operating Budget – House Bill 96 Senate Education Committee

Chairman Brenner, Vice-Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Ingram and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on behalf of KIPP Columbus regarding House Bill 96, Ohio's state operating budget. My name is Ciji Pittman, and I serve as Superintendent at KIPP Columbus, leading and managing our schools, programs, and overall operations for over 2,000 students in Northeast Columbus.

From kindergarten through 12th grade, our team at KIPP Columbus educates a population in which 100% of students qualify for free breakfast and lunch, 95% of students identify as people of color, and about 15% are identified as having special education needs. Since 2020, KIPP Columbus has maintained a 100% graduation rate.

First and foremost, we would like to express our sincere appreciation for Governor DeWine's commitment to improving the lives of Ohio's children through his proposed budget. We also commend the House for its work in passing a budget that addresses key issues in education. We support the thoughtful measures in House Bill 96 that contribute to a brighter future for Ohio's students, particularly those for high performing community schools.

We are grateful to see the following important provisions in the "As Passed by House" version of HB 96:

- **Quality Community Schools Support Funding:** The House has maintained the \$3,000 per pupil allocation for economically disadvantaged students, along with the codification of this funding in state law. This is a significant step forward for our students.
- **Charter School Facility Funding:** We are pleased that the per pupil allocation for facility funding has been increased from \$1,000 to \$1,500. This helps charter schools like KIPP Columbus gain more access to under-utilized public school facilities and alleviate some of the significant challenges we face in providing quality educational spaces for our students.

While we appreciate the progress made in these areas, we believe that further adjustments are necessary to ensure the long-term success of charter schools and their students. Specifically, we respectfully request the following:

- **Increase the Charter Equity Supplement to \$1,000 per student:** The \$650 per pupil allocation has been maintained by the House, and we applaud them for codifying this important support. This funding has been crucial for our students, and we are grateful for the continued support. The gap in funding between charter schools and traditional district schools remains substantial. Increasing the per pupil allocation by \$350 will help close this disparity, providing charter schools with a fairer opportunity to meet the needs of their students. This increase would go a long way in ensuring that all Ohio

students, regardless of their school type, have access to the same quality of education and resources.

We believe this modest increase will help level the playing field, ensuring that community schools have the resources they need to continue providing high-quality education to economically disadvantaged students across Ohio.

In conclusion, KIPP Columbus supports the progress made in HB 96 and strongly encourages the Senate to continue advocating for measures that benefit all Ohio students, including those in charter schools. We are hopeful that the Senate will consider our request for an increase in the charter equity supplement, which will ensure that all students, regardless of their school setting, have access to the resources they need to succeed.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony. I am happy to answer any questions you may have and look forward to working with you to ensure the success of all students in Ohio.