



The Graham School  
The Charles School at Ohio Dominican University  
Graham Elementary and Middle School



**May, 2025**

## **State House Testimony**

Chair Fowler Arther, Vice Chair Odioso, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the Education Committee, I am grateful for the opportunity to testify today in support of House Bill 96, legislation that will significantly impact Ohio's Community Schools now and into the future. My name is Ed Ingman, Co-Superintendent of The Graham School, founded in 2000 in Clintonville, The Charles School at Ohio Dominican University, founded in 2007 in the near east side, and Graham Elementary and Middle School, founded in 2010 in the University District. These locally formed and operated schools exemplify the Community School ethos of small, collaborative, mission driven, nimble, innovative and high quality organizations working together as The Graham Family of Schools.

Our High Quality group of schools currently serves 750 students: 80% of whom are students of color; 80% of whom are economically disadvantaged; and 31% of whom receive special education services. Our students come to us seeking a community in which they can thrive and reach their potential within a safe and supportive environment. We work every day to prepare them for success in elementary school, middle school, high school, college, and their chosen careers. Our students are typically underrepresented in college and many careers. We open the doors to their understanding of what is possible, outlining and supporting their path to achieving their dreams.

At The Charles School at Ohio Dominican University, a state of Ohio recognized high quality early college high school: 66% of students in the TCS@ODU Early College Program will be the first person in their family to earn a degree; 81% of students in the TCS@ODU Early College Program are economically disadvantaged; 96% of students in the TCS@ODU Early College Program are underrepresented in post-secondary education. Our program leverages tax-payer money to help save Ohio families higher education tuition, fees, and books. Since 2009, our families have save \$15 million on these expenses through their enrollment in our early college program.

Students in the TCS@ODU Early College program are nearly three times as likely to enroll in college as students not in the program; 75% of students who enroll persist into their second year; and 90% of students who enroll in college enroll in an Ohio institution.

We appreciate the governor's long-standing commitment to focusing on education to improve the lives of children and build a competitive workforce. This is why I come before you today asking that you:

- Support the Governor's proposed increase in facilities funding from \$1,000 per pupil to \$1,500 which funds nearly half of the remaining need which we project as \$2,000 per student;
- Support the Governor's proposal to move the Quality Community School Support Fund, the Equity Supplement, and Facilities Aid from a budget line item to statute. The vast majority of our expenses are personnel-related and we are constantly uncertain whether our funding will be cut in the next budget cycle. This makes planning for salary increases and committing to grow our schools extremely difficult;
- Consider increasing the Equity Supplement from \$650 per student to \$1,000 to reduce the funding gap between traditional schools and charters; This relatively new funding designed to begin to equalize funding for charter schools and public school districts continues to positively impact charter school operations;
- Hold a high bar on school performance and accountability: specifically, we'd like to see academics play a greater role in charter sponsor evaluations so that both charter sponsors and schools are responsible for keeping high standards. We oppose any efforts to weaken the law that forces consistently low-performing charter schools to close.

With past High Quality Charter funding and facilities funding we have been able to finally pay off the mortgages of our school buildings, removing the significant burden of debt that has been part of our budgets since opening our schools. We have repaired and replaced aging HVAC, plumbing and backflow systems, repaired and replaced curbs and parking lot asphalt, and brought our electrical and technological capabilities into the 21st Century. We have been able to incrementally increase salaries as we attempt to approach the compensation for our teachers and staff that is standard in district schools, and hire support personnel to assist our struggling students reach grade level and beyond in growth and achievement. This funding has also allowed us to

pursue a five year initiative in trauma responsiveness, helping us support our teachers and students so that they are able to engage in the rigorous educational opportunities in our schools. The focus on creating calm and engaging classrooms in our schools has helped our students and teachers enjoy a warm and inviting learning environment.

We continue to seek solutions to the school transportation concerns that have plagued our schools, affecting enrollment, attendance and achievement. The uncertainties of school transportation as provided by the district continues to be an impediment to student achievement. The lack of prioritization and reliability of charter school student transportation is hindering our family's pursuit of choice in education.

We use a holistic approach that aligns instructional practices with a broader school and community support system that is only possible because we are small, collaborative and focused on continuous improvement and growth mindset. We have national partners, EL Education and Middle College National Consortium, providing additional perspectives and research-based practices which enrich our work.

We operate the only five year Early College High School in the state offering a path to an Associates Degree alongside a high school diploma for students typically underrepresented in higher education.

The Graham Family of Schools are grateful for the support of the Governor and Legislature in recognizing our work and our impact on the neediest students in our community.

Sincerely,

Ed Ingman  
Co-Superintendent  
The Graham School  
The Charles School at Ohio Dominican University  
Graham Elementary and Middle School