



**David Taylor, Superintendent of the Dayton Early College Academy (DECA)  
Before the Ohio Senate Finance Committee  
HB 96 Proponent Testimony  
May 28, 2025**

Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Finance Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today as a proponent of House Bill 96. My name is Dave Taylor, and I am the Superintendent of the Dayton Early College Academy (DECA), a network of high-performing public community schools serving about 1,300 K–12 students—roughly 7% of Dayton’s children.

Our mission is clear: to prepare students, many of whom are underrepresented in higher education, to go to and graduate from college. More than 80% of our students are economically disadvantaged, 98% are students of color, and most will be the first in their families to earn a college degree. In a city where the majority of children live in poverty, DECA represents a beacon of hope—an accessible, tuition-free, high-quality public school option for families who dream big for their children.

Since our founding in 2003 as a Dayton Public Schools initiative, and our transition to a community school in 2007, we have consistently produced the highest Ohio State Test scores in the city. Ninety percent of our graduates enroll in college, and 53% go on to earn a college degree—five times the national average for similar demographics, and comparable to many of our suburban neighbors. In total, more than 75% of DECA graduates have earned or are currently pursuing a degree.

We are deeply grateful to Governor DeWine for his commitment to all children and to supporting high-quality community schools. His budget proposal—and the version passed by the House—include key funding provisions in HB 96 that represent real progress toward equity and sustainability. These changes matter, not just to DECA, but to all students in public community schools across Ohio.

## **Facilities Funding: A Fair, Common Sense Approach**

We strongly support the proposed increase in facilities funding from \$1,000 to \$1,500 per pupil. Charter schools like DECA face significant disadvantages when it comes to facilities funding. Without access to

local property tax revenue or school district bond funds, we've had to divert classroom dollars to cover rent, maintenance, and basic upgrades. That's inefficient and unfair.

While \$1,500 per pupil still falls short of the \$2,000 experts recommend, it would make a meaningful difference. It would allow us to invest more in safe, well-maintained, and inspiring learning environments—facilities that tell our students they matter and that their education is valued.

## Continued Quality Community School Support (QCSS)

We're also encouraged by the continued support for the Quality Community School Support (QCSS) program at up to \$3,000 per pupil. DECA has been recognized by the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce as a high-quality charter school, and this funding has been critical to sustaining that success.

Thanks to QCSS, we've been able to maintain small class sizes, attract and retain great teachers, and offer targeted support programs like tutoring, mentoring, and summer enrichment. These investments close achievement gaps and drive college success. This is not accidental—it's the result of deliberate, well-funded educational programming.

## Equity Supplement – A Needed Increase

We also appreciate the continuation of the \$650 per pupil Equity Supplement designed to reduce the funding gap between traditional public and public charter schools. However, we must be honest: that gap remains wide, and it is unjustifiable.

We urge the committee to increase the Equity Supplement to \$1,000 per pupil. This would help bring charter schools closer to true funding parity and allow us to better support students who often come to school facing greater academic and social challenges. Research and experience both confirm that educating students from disadvantaged backgrounds requires more—not less—investment. DECA and schools like it are already achieving strong results. With adequate support, we can do even more.

## Codifying Funding in Law

One of the most critical elements of HB 96 is its proposal to transition these key funding items—facilities funding, the QCSS, and the Equity Supplement—from temporary budget line items to permanent provisions in statute. This is a smart and necessary step.

Our work depends on long-term planning—whether it's hiring teachers, implementing curriculum, or investing in infrastructure. When key funding sources are uncertain or change every two years, that

planning becomes difficult, and schools are forced to operate in a state of instability. Codifying these supports gives us the security to grow, improve, and serve students consistently and effectively.

## Addressing the Disadvantaged Pupil Impact Aid (DPIA)

Before closing, I want to address a gap in HB 96: the current structure of Disadvantaged Pupil Impact Aid (DPIA). DPIA is meant to help schools serve Ohio's most vulnerable students—those experiencing poverty, housing instability, or trauma. But as currently designed, DPIA funds do not reliably reach the schools that serve the highest concentrations of those students.

DECA, for example, serves a student population that is over 80% economically disadvantaged, yet we often don't receive the full level of DPIA support needed to address their complex needs. We respectfully urge the committee to revisit the DPIA formula to ensure that dollars follow students, particularly those most in need. Equity means funding schools based on student needs—not school type.

## Responsible Stewardship and Results

I want to close by emphasizing that DECA and schools like it are working hard to be excellent stewards of the resources you've entrusted to us. With increased state support over recent years, we have raised teacher salaries, implemented stronger academic and behavioral interventions, adopted high-quality instructional materials, and expanded student support. These investments are working. We've retained more top-tier teachers, maintained our status as academic leaders in Dayton, and are now exploring ways to serve more students in our region.

We are grateful for your past support, and we ask that you not stop now. HB 96 will help us continue fulfilling our mission and transforming lives through education.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony. I am happy to answer any questions and stand ready to support your work however I can.