



**UNITED SCHOOLS**

FOR EVERY CHILD, AN OPEN DOOR.

**Andrew Boy, Founder & CEO, United Schools  
Testimony before the Senate Finance Committee  
May 28, 2025**

Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Finance 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. Next year, we will welcome more students 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 and ninety-six percent (96%) of our alumni go on to graduate from high school.

Yet the success of our schools has not come without significant financial hardships.. Ohio's charter schools operate with less funding and less facility access than their district counterparts. These disparities have 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. It is becoming increasingly difficult to keep pace with the rising costs of running a public school and shield our students from funding gaps.

We are grateful for the investments that you and your fellow lawmakers have made in public education, including charter public schools. 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 several key provisions that would provide fair and sustainable support to public school students attending high-quality charter schools like ours. I ask that you support the following priorities, proposed by the Governor and kept in by the House.

First, please maintain the charter school facilities funding at \$1,500 per student. While it still falls short of the estimated \$2,000 per student needed to address our facilities' challenges fully, we appreciate the increased investments so that we can provide safe, welcoming, and high-quality school facilities to our students.

Second, high-quality charter schools in Columbus 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 ask that you help close the gap by increasing it to \$1,000 per student.

Also, funding should be targeted where it is needed most. Disadvantaged Pupil Impact Aide (DPIA), designed to support the learning needs of our most disadvantaged students, is not as focused on public schools with the highest concentration of poverty. We support budget shifts that would ensure a focus on high-poverty communities, such as direct certification-based funding instead of relying on ever-changing federal meal program guidelines.

Third, please maintain the proposal to memorialize three key funding streams in code, including the charter equity grant, the charter facilities fund, and the high-quality charter grant, to provide greater stability and predictability for schools like ours. Knowing we can count on these funds annually 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, it is critical to maintain high standards for school performance and accountability, and ask that you hold the same high bar. 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 all students have access to a high-quality education they deserve, whether they attend a district or a charter school.

Facilities support is also critically needed. Many public school buildings are under-enrolled and underused. And many districts are not following the law that requires them to make unused facilities available to charter schools. The Governor's budget proposal added guardrails to fix this problem, but unfortunately, the House removed the fix. We ask the Senate to add it back in with some common-sense amendments.

Last, I want to call your attention to a long-standing transportation problem exacerbated by the Columbus City Schools (CCS) and contributing to chronic absenteeism, significantly slowing academic progress, and

deteriorating trust in our educational system. CCS systematically denied nearly 2,000 Columbus students yellow bus transportation this school year, an action they took with no warning to the families or the schools they are compelled to serve. Less than a month before our first day of school, CCS passed a board resolution naming dozens of United students impractical to transport. This decision created chaos that played out in the media and resulted in pending litigation with the Attorney General. We need to change how we think about yellow bus service now. United is ready to support our state's leaders in reimagining school transportation.

In closing, I want to reiterate my gratitude for your commitment to all of Ohio's students. Your decisions have a profound impact on the lives of children across our state.

I urge you to maintain the Governor's proposals for charter schools, restore what the House removed, uphold high standards of accountability, and develop transportation solutions for our students and communities who need it most.

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 have.