

Thankyou Senate Finance Committee and Chair. My name is Braxton Miller and I am submitting testimony in support of EmpowerOhio.org budget amendment request by reading this statement from Dr. Chad Carr, Superintendent.

I am State Superintendent, Executive Vice President and Chief Academic Officer for Accel schools. My job is to research new, innovative ways to increase student achievement in our schools. Accel operates 82 schools in the state of Ohio.

For 19 years I have lived in Ohio. I operated the highest scoring school in the state for 7 years setting records for achievement. Again this past year, many of our schools will be ranked among the best and highest scoring schools.

Three of these schools, Western Toledo Prep, German Village and Capital Collegiate utilize the Empower - Mental Wellness program started by Devier Posey and Braxton Miller. This program has helped achieve safer students, mentally balanced students, well fed students and higher achieving students.

Many ask me how we achieve such academic excellence. They want to know what secret academic method we are using. It's simple; a well fed, happy, active, competitive, and engaged child will have better academic achievement than a neglected, hungry, non-motivated student who does not feel safe.

Since the pandemic, Social, Emotional programs have been "popping up" all over the state. Typically these programs are operated by non-certified counselors (usually social workers), who meet with kids to check their mental wellness. Most do not have an objective nor a curriculum.

The difference with the Empower program is that there are a series of mental health checks and a prescribed curriculum for students to be active physically, safe physically, active and challenged academically in an after school or summer camp environment.

The effects of the program on the aforementioned schools was that enrollment increased and attendance increased. Each school had an increase of attendance between 5-7%. This occurred because parents need an afterschool program for students. Typical jobs do not end at 3:30, so parents need a trustworthy after school program for their students that lasts until 6pm.

With increased attendance and mental check ins, behavioral occurrences are down by 10%. When students are happier, there are fewer behavior problems. Lastly, academic achievement increased. Students who are safe, challenged physically and mentally, can achieve better academically. German Village and Capital had increases of 5 performance index points on the Ohio State test in just 6 months of the program and Western Toledo had an increase of 10 PI points.

With gains like these, we want to increase the number of schools who offer this program in our state and increase the number of students who can take part in this program. Once you find a program that shows such incredible results, you want to share that program with as many school aged students as possible. Increased funding for transportation to the program and training opportunities for the mental health professional would increase the capacity of the program and help reach more students. Investing in a good, proven program will help meet the massive demand of this program. All parents want to take part in the program, but transportation limitations and lack of trained mental service providers limits the number of students who can be serviced. Again, we have found a proven program that affects change, please help us take this program to more students in need.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Dr. Chad Carr