

March 1, 2021

Dear Chairwoman Richardson, Ranking Member Troy, and Members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education,

For nearly 25 years Community Schools have been a vital part of Ohio's public education landscape. A recent Fordham Institute study showed that in addition to offering students educational choice, these schools on average outperform their traditional counterparts. As educators who work day-to-day with public community charter school students and their families, we appreciate the hard work and diligence that went into the Cupp-Patterson bill in the last General Assembly, and we also are enthusiastic at the prospect of H.B. 1 (Callender-Sweeney) building on those efforts.

Below are several issues that we believe are critical to ensuring that our schools will continue to thrive both academically and financially, and we look forward to discussing those issues in greater depth as we continue to work together on behalf of Ohio's children.

Community schools are indeed public schools, but their per student funding amounts are significantly less than traditional public school district funding, sometimes less than half the funding of the district schools. These schools have no local tax base and therefore should be funded by the state in a similar way that the state funds school districts, with minimal local funding. We believe there are at least two additional areas that would create more equity and helping community school students.

First, community schools struggle to provide adequate facilities largely because they do not receive local property taxes. We support an increase in the per pupil amount for charter school facilities. Community schools often spend more than \$1,000 per students on their facilities and related expenses.

Second, community schools support the idea of having the option to provide their own transportation, and we are hopeful that the per pupil amount could be increased to make it more comparable to the statewide per pupil transportation cost.

We heartily support a state funding system that is both fair and equitable. We also hope a funding system that includes community schools will give our schools the necessary assurances that our funding will not be jeopardized in the future. In the last General Assembly, there were good discussions around lessening the tension between traditional public schools and public community schools, and we completely support that goal. At the same time, community schools must have a legislative assurance that our funding will not face the dire threat of a line-item veto in the future.

In all, we believe the funding and policy changes in H.B. 1 will recognize the high performance of community schools and allow community schools to build upon the proven model that allows for us to educate our students and provide them with more high-quality choices. We look forward to discussing these and other issues with you in the near future.

Sincerely,

ACCEL, Academy for Urban Scholars, Buckeye Community Hope Foundation, Charter School Specialists, Concept Schools, Educational Empowerment Group, Foxfire, Imagine Schools, Oakmont, Ohio Council of Community Schools

