

## Testimony Regarding H.B. 110

Date of Testimony: May 4, 2021

Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide interested party testimony regarding House Bill 110.

My name is Andrea Dobbins, and I am the Director of Online Education with Charter School Specialists. I have spent the last sixteen years working in charter schools, more notably, online charter schools. I am speaking to you today based on my experience not only as a parent, an educator and building leader, but also as a strong advocate for the innovation and opportunity that charter schools afford students in Ohio.

Throughout my career in education, I have heard countless stories from families on how charter schools have saved their children. Charter schools offer opportunities for students that they may not always benefit from or fit into in a traditional setting. Stories from student athletes, young and working parents, students with special or medical needs to name just a few are commonplace among families seeking a charter school experience. Enhanced access to college coursework or career technical experiences for students may not always fit into a typical schedule in a traditional setting. These are things that can easily be achieved when students and parents have a choice. Charter Schools originated on the concept of being innovative and creative to afford more students an opportunity at success. Online charters in particular offer a large amount of opportunity and flexibility for students to achieve.

This past year, the pandemic has highlighted the ability and resiliency of students and schools to continue to achieve great things while working remotely. I will not stand before you and pretend that it was easy or that there were not problems during remote learning. However, I also will not pretend that there was not a great deal of success as well. We tend to focus on the negative, yet many students discovered a sense of self-motivation during this time that will help them meet the needs of an ever-changing future workforce. Many students were able to accelerate their learning and discover and investigate new things. Many teachers were able to build and develop relationships with students that they were never able to connect with previously. Online learning is clearly not for every student. However, many thrive in this model. This is one of the many reasons why school choice in the state of Ohio is something that should be protected and supported.

With that, I'd like to extend a thank you to the legislature for your past support of school choice and charter schools in Ohio.

For your consideration today I request that the Senate ensure funding equity between charter schools and districts. All students in the state of Ohio should be afforded equitable opportunity in their education. I also request that the Senate ensure that school choice options like charter schools are protected from a line-item veto if charters are funded directly and no longer deducted from districts' state funding. And lastly, I request that online charters have access to additional types of funding such as aid for economically disadvantaged students. Currently, online charters in Ohio only receive base funding called the Opportunity Grant, special education, and career tech funding. They do not receive economically disadvantaged aid, aid for English learners, or K-3 early literacy funding. This highlights an

inequity in education funding for students in Ohio. Again, I respectfully request that you consider ensuring equal access to online charters in Ohio.

Thank you Chairman Brenner and members of the committee for the opportunity to speak with you today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.

Andrea Dobbins  
Director of School Improvement & School Improvement Coordinator  
Charter School Specialists