



HB 110 Interested Party Testimony  
David Taylor, Superintendent of the Dayton Early College Academy  
Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education  
Chair Andrew Brenner  
May 4, 2021

Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Fedor and members of the Primary and Secondary Education Committee, I am honored to be before you today as an interested party on HB 110, sponsored by Representative Oelslager. My name is Dave Taylor, and I am the Superintendent of the Dayton Early College Academy (commonly known as DECA), a network of high performing community schools in the city of Dayton. Our three schools serve approximately 1,300 students K-12 in Dayton, or about 6% of our city's children, with a singular focus of helping each of them gain the skills they need to go to and graduate from college. Our schools overwhelmingly serve children who are underrepresented in higher education: three quarters of our students are considered economically disadvantaged, 98% are children of color, and the vast majority will be in their family's first generation to graduate from college.

Too often in our country, a child's zip code and skin color tell us all we need to know about her academic and economic future. This is especially true in the city of Dayton where the majority of children live in poverty. Since DECA's inception as a Dayton Public school in 2003 and through our conversion to become a community school in 2007, we have served as a choice for families in Dayton who are searching for a school that will challenge their children academically and provide them with the structure and support they need to find success. Our schools are providing hope--a free and readily accessible school option--for families in our city who are bold enough to dream about the future their children deserve. DECA has consistently produced the highest performing schools in the city of Dayton on the Ohio State Tests, and 98% of our graduates go on to enroll in college. What's more, we boast a college graduation rate of more than 50%--that is five times the national average for students of similar demographics. Since our inception, over 75% of DECA graduates have either graduated from college or are still enrolled.

I wish to thank Governor DeWine and Lieutenant Governor Husted for their ongoing fight to support all children--especially children from historically marginalized communities. Their recent budget proposal reflects their deep commitment to see all children receive the support they need regardless of the type of school they attend. One provision within their budget I wish to call out is the Quality Community School Support provision. During the 2019 budget process, we cheered the adoption of this policy, and we are delighted to see that the Governor and Lieutenant Governor have proposed increasing the funding for this program from \$30 million each fiscal year to \$54 million a year. This provision has provided community schools that have consistently demonstrated their ability to outperform their home district and outpace the state's expectations for growth with the additional support we need to continue and expand the work that we're doing in Ohio's challenged school districts.

Our schools have been recipients of the Quality Community School Support funds during this current budget. Since our conversion to become a community school, we have operated our schools, frankly, at a deficit each year and rely upon fundraising to offer our students the college preparatory education they have come to expect and deserve. These funds have, for the first time, allowed us to invest in meaningful ways to enhance our students' learning experience at DECA. We have been able to make significant inroads to

retain our high performing teachers, improve our building infrastructure, and invest in an aligned curriculum. We need these funds to grow our impact in the Dayton community and ensure that more children have the opportunity they deserve to strive for greatness.

We have known for some time that poverty and student achievement are negatively correlated and while community schools receive some additional funding to support our efforts to mitigate the impact of generational poverty, we know that without this provision our funding levels are alarmingly insufficient to meet our children's needs. Simply put, it costs more for us to do this work and to do it effectively. Inside of our school walls we act as surrogate parents to our students. We constantly run activities before school, after school, on weekends, over breaks, and during the summer to help students make up ground academically. We work diligently to ensure that we are equipping our students with the skills they need to interact socially and professionally. We ensure that every student in our schools completes college courses while they are in high school. We track them after they leave us to provide support as they move to and through college. We constantly work to improve our ability to understand our students' cultures, experiences, and values to ensure they are reflected in our curriculum and instructional practices. During the pandemic we have adapted and reshaped our model of instruction several times to meet our students' academic, social, and emotional needs. We labor to find teachers who are willing to consistently go beyond the expectations of what the typical classroom teacher is expected to do. I would welcome any of you here to come visit our schools--there simply are no shortcuts to serving our students well. We do all of these things and so much more because our scholars--in fact every child--deserves to go to a school that believes in them and is worthy of them.

HB 110 appears to be the comprehensive culmination of years of effort to provide K-12 schools with the resources they need and is clearly a strong step in the right direction. However it fails to put children who attend community schools on equal footing with those who attend traditional schools. A few years ago, the Fordham Foundation released a study that concluded that community schools located in the Big Eight cities receive on average \$4,092 fewer dollars per pupil when compared to the traditional school districts located in the Big Eight. Now it's true that community schools will see increased funding under this proposal, but this delta between traditional urban schools' funding and that of community schools will actually increase if no changes are made. This is why I am imploring you to fund the Quality Community School Fund at the Governor's proposed level of \$54 million. The Quality Community School Support Fund is the most efficient way for the legislature to support high performing community schools serving children in communities that have been historically under supported.

Two years ago, this government saw it fit to create and fund the Quality Community School Support provision, and I would submit that the program--despite the havoc wreaked by the pandemic--has been a rousing success in encouraging community schools to step up to meet the expectations of quality established by this body. I implore you to not just sustain this program, but to fund it at a level that honors the financial commitment stated in the original bill. Please do not throw away something that is working just when it is starting to pay dividends for the children in our state who need it the most. Instead I encourage you to double down where you can see clear returns on your investment. Innovative approaches like this are what will ensure that successful schools serving Ohio's historically marginalized communities continue to improve and eventually serve more students.

I am grateful that you are approaching this endeavor with clear eyes and that you have afforded me an opportunity to share my thoughts with you. I stand ready to help you in any way I may, and I would welcome any questions you may have for me.