



HB 110 Interested Party Testimony
Musa Hakim Jr., Breakthrough Public Schools
Senate Committee on Primary and Secondary Education
Chairman Andrew Brenner
May 5, 2021

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chairman Blessing, Ranking Member Fedor and members of the Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today as an interested party on HB 110, the state biennial budget bill. My name is Musa Hakim Jr. and I graduated from Breakthrough Public Schools in 2013. Breakthrough Public Schools is a network of 12 nonprofit, high performing community schools in Cleveland, most of which are sponsored by the Cleveland Metropolitan School District. Our student population is 99% minority and 70% low-income who often arrive at our schools several grade levels behind in educational attainment. Breakthrough Public Schools continues to rank among the highest rated charter networks in the state of Ohio, consistently outperforming our urban counterparts as well as many suburban school districts.

I started at Breakthrough Public Schools in 2010 and I can say wholeheartedly that going to Breakthrough Public Schools changed my life. Growing up in the worst part of Cleveland opened my eyes to obvious discrepancies in my life. Breakthrough gave me the tools to overcome my circumstances and the barriers that would be placed before me. Following my graduation from Breakthrough Public Schools Cliffs Campus in 2013, I attended one of the top boarding schools in the country, Cate School in Carpinteria, California. Now I am only but a few weeks away from graduating from Case Western Reserve University with a degree in Materials Science and Engineering and it was Breakthrough Schools telling me as a 6th grader that I would graduate from college in the year 2021 that gave me the resolve to push through the rigors associated with an engineering degree at a top engineering university. I have even spent the last year volunteering with Breakthrough to find new ways to bridge the equity gap in Cleveland for our young scholars as they head into life beyond 8th grade. Breakthrough Schools did not sit with me during exams, or help me write my essays, nor did Breakthrough Schools spend the countless hours I've put towards changing my own life trajectory. Breakthrough Schools simply showed me that I had the potential to do so myself.

During the 2019 budget process, we worked closely with Governor DeWine on the inclusion and passage of the Quality Community School Support Fund. This program provided \$30 million each fiscal year distributed on a per-pupil basis for students who attend a "quality" community school as defined in law, with more resources being allocated to economically disadvantaged students.

The initiative went a long way towards closing the severe funding gap between district schools and charter schools. This is critical because for far too long, the lack of sufficient charter funding has made it nearly impossible for the top charter schools to expand to serve more students. The

increased funding has allowed our networks to identify and train more teachers, retain our existing teachers, and reduce our reliance on generous philanthropic support from our community.

In the as introduced budget, Governor DeWine proposed an increase in funding for this program to \$54 million per year in recognition of its success. More children qualify for funding because more schools have attained the definition of “quality” as described in the fund.

Unfortunately, the House reduced the funding for the Quality Community School Support Fund \$30 million. We feel this is a mistake. Ohio has come a long way in providing more rigorous oversight and accountability to its community school system. As a result, bad schools have been closed, results have improved for several years and most important, our children scholars are receiving an education that prepares them to succeed. The Quality Community School Support Fund has played a significant part in continuing this trend.

Please consider restoring the Quality Community School Support Fund in HB 110 to \$54 million per year. I will be happy to take any questions you may have.