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## Senate Primary & Secondary Education Committee

# Testimony on Sub. Senate Bill 240

## Kevin Duff, Vice President, Policy & Research Ohio Excels

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Chair Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on Substitute Senate Bill 240 (Sub. SB 240). My name is Kevin Duff, and I am the Vice President for Policy and Research at Ohio Excels.

Ohio Excels – a non-partisan, non-profit organization created by leaders of Ohio's business community – is committed to helping improve educational outcomes for Ohio's students and ensuring that all K-12 schools prepare students for success in the next step of their lives, whether it is higher education, the military, or the workforce.

We believe it is critical that all students and families have high-quality choices when selecting a school, and we believe that creating a structure for community school networks can help improve access to underserved students. Sub. SB 240 builds on a solid proposal by making important changes to improve the quality, transparency, accountability, and efficiency of community school networks.

The new version of bill made the definition for school quality more rigorous and aligned the definition to one already in law for the Quality Community Schools Support program. When forming a network, at least half of the schools must be considered a community school of quality. The bill also requires sponsors to be rated "Effective" or higher before creating a network.

Establishing a network will increase the transparency and accountability for the network as a whole and for each of its member schools. The bill will require the standard school report card for each member school and one for the network itself, which would include the student performance data from all member schools. This gives families more information on how well schools in their neighborhoods are serving the needs of children. If a community school in the network is persistently low performing, it may still be closed by the automatic closure provisions already in law.

There are also several operational efficiencies that come with networks. Beyond the obvious financial savings that come with sharing administrative costs, networks can improve services for students. For example, a community school that cannot afford a fine arts teacher by itself could share that teacher between multiple buildings, opening the possibility of more electives for students. The network can also help schools cope with the temporary staffing shortages that many public schools are facing.

In conclusion, I would like to thank Senator Peterson and the members of this committee for creating and improving the proposals within Sub. SB 240. Thank you again for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony today. I am happy to answer any questions you might have.