



**Senate Primary and Secondary Committee
Interested Party Testimony SB 240
Presented by Darold Johnson
President, Ohio Federation of Teachers
March 29, 2022**

Chair Brenner, Vice-Chair Blessing, and Ranking member Fedor and members of the Senate Primary and Secondary Committee, I am Darold Johnson, Legislative Director for the Ohio Federation of Teachers (OFT). OFT represents teachers, paraprofessionals, school nurses, higher education staff and faculty, public employees, and library staff. We appreciate the opportunity to share our thoughts on SB 240.

We are here today to testify as an interested party. We represent eight charter schools, including three within Summit Academy Management. According to the fiscal notes, Summit Academy Management meets the guidelines proposed by this bill for forming a network.

Our concerns are as follows:

- **SB 240 creates more workload and expense for the Ohio Department of Education.**

The LSC fiscal note for SB 240 says “the bill will pose short-term but potentially significant increases in ODE’s administrative workload to allow for community school networks within its information technology (IT) systems, as ODE indicated that its current systems cannot accommodate them.” According to the fiscal note, ODE will need to implement the separate report card required for each community school network and the individual school doubling ODE’s work.

- **SB 240 does not guarantee more transparency.**

Although the established networks will be non-profit, our experience has been that transparency does not carry through the entire system. In past negotiations when we have asked to see fiscal records, we were only permitted to see the budget for the particular school where we were negotiating. The local budget had large sums of money that were sent to the management company. Those records were considered private records. Though SB 240 would make records transparent at a network level, we are still concerned that financial records at a management level could remain undisclosed.

- **SB 240 could create conditions that are not in the best interest of students or staff**

The proponents of this bill raise the benefit of being able to move staff between buildings. While this may sometimes make financial sense, it can be detrimental to students. For example, having one nurse or one counselor for four schools means that on any given day, 75% of schools do not have access to those services. In addition, moving teachers between schools does not create a working environment that encourages teachers to stay. Charter schools are already susceptible to high turnover causing instability in the system that is detrimental to students. These types of working conditions could make turnover even higher.

Because some of the concerns we raise apply not only to a potential network but also to existing community schools, we ask that the Senate consider adding the following:

- Specify that only a nonprofit organization or governing board of an educational service center (ESC) may enter into or renew a contract to be a community school's operator. While SB 240 requires non-profit status, we ask that this apply to all community schools.
- Specify that any record pertaining to the delivery of educational services, leases, or any other record regarding the management or operation of a community school kept by the school's sponsor or governing authority or any nonprofit or for-profit entity under contract with the school is a public record. We ask that this apply to **all** community schools.
- Specify that all operational meetings are subject to open meeting laws, including board meetings, and making those materials available to the public. We ask that this apply to **all** community schools, not just those within a network.
- Require the Auditor of State to annually audit all accounts, reports, records, and files regarding receipt or expenditure of public funds received by each community school operator. We ask that this apply to **all** community schools.

We support more accountability for community schools and hope the committee will consider these ideas in future deliberations. I welcome any questions you may have.