

Senate Primary & Secondary Education Committee

Substitute SB 240: Opponent Testimony

April 5, 2022

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Eric S. Gordon

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Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Fedor and members of the Senate Primary & Secondary Education Committee, my name is Eric Gordon, Chief Executive Officer of the Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD). I appreciate the opportunity to submit written testimony in regards to Substitute Senate Bill (Sub. SB) 240.

I am sharing our opposition to Sub. SB 240 which would permit a nonprofit operator and the community schools it operates to merge and form a community school network. Many of our concerns with Sub. SB 240 relate to CMSD's role as a charter school sponsor but furthermore as a public school district, as the legislation has the potential to lessen accountability for charter schools.

CMSD currently sponsors eight community schools and has been a charter school sponsor for many years. Our work as a sponsor is codified in state law as part of *The Cleveland Plan*. Sponsoring and collaborating with charter schools aligns with *The Cleveland Plan's* vision of embracing parental choice, by ensuring all Cleveland neighborhoods have high-quality choices, both district and charter, for parents to choose from.

We believe it is a fundamental principle going back to their creation that charter schools should have *increased* accountability in exchange for their increased autonomy. However, Sub. SB 240 would reduce accountability and allow for the creation of duplicate, shadow school districts.

Additionally, the bill appears designed as a carve out for certain charter school management companies, while excluding others by specifying it has to be a nonprofit management company. And, while the state would still issue report cards for each school within the network, the bill would prohibit sponsors from evaluating them at the building level. This means if a single building has academic, compliance, or financial issues or even needed to be closed, it may not be possible.

Overall, we believe Sub. SB 240 would seriously weaken the role of sponsors, who are the primary entities responsible for holding charter schools accountable, thereby creating an environment where groups of schools could further evade accountability. As a school district and charter sponsor, CMSD has embraced school choice. However, this legislation seriously harms the fundamental bargain at the heart of the charter school concept by weakening accountability for some groups of charter schools.

For these reasons I respectfully ask you to reject Sub. SB 240.

Thank you for your time and consideration, I am available for any questions or follow-ups.

Sincerely,



Eric S. Gordon
EDUCATOR: Chief Executive Officer
Cleveland Metropolitan School District