



AN ALLIANCE OF OHIO'S URBAN SUPERINTENDENTS AND TEACHER UNION PRESIDENTS

Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee

Opponent Party Testimony SB 240

Offered in written form by Paul Palomba

Co-Chair of the Ohio 8 Coalition & President of the Canton Professional Educators Association

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Chairman Brenner, Vice-Chairman Blessing, Ranking member Fedor and members of the Senate Primary and Secondary Committee, my name is Paul Palomba, Co-Chair of the Ohio 8 Coalition and President of the Canton Professional Educators Association. I am submitting written testimony on behalf of the Ohio 8 Coalition, which is an alliance of the Superintendent and teacher union Presidents for Ohio's eight urban school districts. The Ohio 8 stands opposed to SB 240 and below is a brief outline of our concerns, some of which we testified to in 2015 during deliberations on House Bill 2.

Regardless of where a student is educated (traditional public, private, parochial or charter/community school), there must be a singular accountability system for not only the delivery of instruction to students but also financial and operational accountability for the institution serving that student. For the better part of two decades Ohio has remained largely inconsistent in attempting build a singular accountability system. In fact, there have been various pieces of legislation that have sought to carve out exceptions for charter schools in the name of fewer mandates and restrictive policies and these have led to mixed results.

In short, every student deserves a high-quality education, and every parent deserves transparent access to school performance and financial information to support their efforts to make the best educational choices for their children. Senate Bill 240, however, departs from what is best for students and parents due to the following:

1) Structure of the Suggested Network: If such a network is not allowable with traditional public, private, or parochial schools, it does not seem consistent to provide an exception to charter schools to have this type of structural flexibility. There is an ongoing comparison between the academic performance of public schools and charters schools. Many of these are not apples to apples comparisons and allowing for the accountability system to apply to the network instead of the individual building would only further skew those comparison and give parents and the community an inaccurate impression of performance. To remain consistent across all educational options offered to families, networks should not be allowed unless offered to all educational settings/institutions.

2) Movement of Network Staff: While this might be optimal for management companies, this suggested flexibility does not provide for the best learning environment for students and families. Aside from a parent or caregiver, the most influential individual in a child's academic career is their teacher. Any policy that seeks to destabilize the consistency of educators in the classroom might be a convenience for a management company, but it is not what is best for students or educators.

3) Financial Transparency: The suggested networks might have a degree of transparency as a unit, but Ohio has seen that disclosure of key financial documents at the charter school management level has been problematic. Parents and communities should have access to any and all financial records including budgets, audits, etc. If public dollars are used for their education operation, then related financial records should be available to the public.

4) Public Records Classification: To build on the financial transparency point and reinforce what the Ohio 8 Coalition stated back in 2015 on House Bill 2, all Charter schools and their management companies should be added to the list of entities considered to be a "public office" under Ohio Sunshine law so that their records are made public (ORC Section 149.011) for parents and the community at any point in time. This should apply to all charter schools and all records related to finances and operational matters including board meetings.

Thank you for allowing us to submit this testimony and your consideration of our feedback as this conversation evolves. The Ohio 8 Coalition stands ready as a resource to this committee to ensure policy reflects what is best for students. Thank you.

[The Ohio 8 Coalition](#) is a strategic alliance composed of the superintendents and teacher union presidents from Ohio's eight urban school districts – Akron, Canton, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Toledo, and Youngstown. The Ohio 8 Coalition's mission is to work with policy makers to improve academic performance, increase graduation rates and close the achievement gap for urban children throughout Ohio. The Coalition carries out its mission by working closely with legislators, educators, parents, labor, and community officials. The Coalition brings a shared administrator-teacher voice to shape education policy.