Dr. Darlene Chambers
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Interested Party—HB 2

Good Morning Chairman Hayes, Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the House Education Committee. Thank you for allowing me to testify as an Interested Party today on House Bill 2.

My name is Dr. Darlene Chambers and I am the President and CEO of the Ohio Alliance for Public Charter Schools. Our mission here at the Ohio Alliance for Public Charter Schools (OAPCS) is to provide children with greater educational opportunities by improving the quality and fostering the growth of Ohio's public charter schools.

I would like to applaud the House for its comprehensive and meaningful reform of charter school accountability. Your leadership and commitment on this issue is steadfast and the rest of the nation is watching to see what Ohio does to continue its support for quality choice. Recently, there have been some reports released that have highlighted some charter school oversight and transparency concerns. I am encouraged to see that many of the provisions in House Bill 2 attempt to address those concerns while appreciating current legislation already in place.

The Ohio Alliance for Public Charter Schools (OAPCS) is committed to ensuring that Ohio's children have access to a quality education regardless of their zip code. Educational options are the cornerstone to addressing the ever changing needs of Ohio's school children. It is with this mindset, that we believe House Bill 2 provides a solid foundation on forward thinking reform. Some of the highlights in House Bill 2 include:

- Prohibiting sponsors selling services that they have an oversight function of to schools they oversee.
- Requiring each member of a governing authority certify annually that they have reviewed and will abide by the school's conflicts of interest policy.
- Prohibiting "sponsor hopping" by requiring a certain level of performance be met prior to entering into a new contract, while including an appeals process for those rare instances where there are extenuating circumstances.
- Requiring that copies of financial and enrollment records be furnished to the sponsor, members of the governing authority, and the designated fiscal officer on a monthly basis. (This legislation builds on previous legislation, HB 10 from the 130th GA.)
- Allowing the Department of Education, in consultation with the Auditor of State, to provide optional guidance and suggestions to assist each community school in the creation of policies and procedures related to internal financial controls.

Enacting these provisions will help Ohio continue to offer quality educational options to parents and students.

With OAPCS being a membership organization, we must be a strong advocate for all of our members who at times have differences of opinions. Knowing that and consulting with our members, there are also some provisions in House Bill 2 that we feel need some further consideration. Some of those provisions include:

- The school's financial plan is subject to review and approval by the Department of Education. While this provision is good in concept, there needs to be an establishment of criteria so there is transparency about what is expected and what is not. This will aid in the creation of an objective and fair review. Also, we would advocate for an appeals process to be built in.

- The requirement that the fiscal officer be employed or under contract with the governing authority. We believe this is important, but we also must take into consideration the fiscal impact to governing authorities to hire outside fiscal officers.

In conclusion, let us be reminded that nearly 125,000 parents and students have chosen charter schools as the best educational option. There are close to 400 charter schools in Ohio, all with the same goal of ensuring all of Ohio's students have access to a quality education. We look forward to continuing to work with the legislature as a resource to help guide policy so that we can have a positive effect on every child's education.

Thank you for allowing me to testify this morning. I am happy to answer any questions the committee may have!