

Testimony of Andrew B Wilson, member Fairborn Board of Education, before Ohio House of Representatives Education Committee Tuesday March 17, 2015.

Chairman Hayes and members of the House Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding the impact of community (charter) schools and HB2 on Fairborn City Schools.

The Fairborn City School District (FCS), Greene County, operates 5 school facilities serving approximately 4,300 students. Nearly 55% of our students qualify for free and reduced lunch. Over two thirds of our students live outside the traditional two parent household.

FCS is the sponsor of Fairborn Digital Academy (FDA), a community school which leases one of our closed schools. FDA is the largest community school transfer from our budget, accounting for \$742,000 of the \$2,772,000 total. FDA is one of the top performing community schools in the Dayton area. The board of FDA is from the local area and serves on a volunteer basis.

FDA was established to provide an education option to the students in the area that do not or are not able to attend traditional public schools. The enrollment is approximately 160 students with about 120 from the Fairborn City School District. Many of the students at FDA are first time high school graduates of their families.

While we strongly support the focus on accountability and transparency in HB2, however, the language in HB2 regarding shared services will adversely affect both entities in Fairborn. We understand the reasons behind these efforts as shared services in a for profit environment invite just that – profit for both parties, usually at tax payer expense.

FDA purchases transportation services on a voluntary basis from FCS at a cost that is much lower than would otherwise be available. Our buses are in the area and do not need to travel great distances to provide transportation to FDA.

FDA also purchases food services from FCS, again since FCS provides this at cost and our preparation facilities are in the neighborhood this is the most cost efficient option for FDA.

FDA also is able to take advantage of the FCS membership in the Metropolitan Dayton Educational Cooperative Association (MDECA) for the purchase of broad band services, and a wide variety of other materials and equipment.

The shared services are not a one-way street, FDA provides FCS with important technology services that the district would struggle to provide. FDA coordinates the digital learning lab at Baker Middle School allowing our 6-8 grade students access to current technology.

Since FDA is focused on their students rather than profits, the staff searches for the best technology curriculum rather than the least costly. Their software knowledge and purchases are shared with FCS which enables FCS to explore the best available options in blended learning.

FDA requires their students to attend tutoring/coaching sessions twice per week to provide a face to face contact and assist with issues is the use of the technology and to provide the students with needed coaching in life skills. There is also a family outreach service that provides other family members that may not have a high school diploma the opportunity to obtain a diploma or GED.

We invite you to visit FCS and FDA to see how our partnership is operating to provide needed services to our community. We believe this model is the original intent of the community school option.

The shared services language as it exists endangers all of these benefits as well as the very existence of FDA and the benefits that FCS and its students are able to obtain from FDA.

Please consider revisions to the language in HB2 that will allow district sponsored community schools operating within the district on a not for profit basis to provide and/or obtain shared services with the sponsoring district.

Other impacts that community schools have or could have on FCS include –

Unreimbursed transportation services within the state mandated range.

We provide services that require 3 buses on a daily basis to transport students to 2 community schools in Xenia. One of these schools is the second largest deduction from our budget. The cost to the district to provide these services is in excess of \$180,000 per year. The community school calendars do not align with FCS in many cases. This requires calling in drivers on days that would otherwise be off days for the driver.

Student churn – FCS had nearly 600 students transfer to community schools at one point this year. Of that original number we have seen over 130 return to the district. This is disruptive to the student and the district.

We applaud your efforts to bring long overdue transparency and accountability to the for profit sector of the community school network in Ohio. It would be detrimental to the segment of society that community schools were created to help if legislation was passed that caused these optional education opportunities to cease to exist. Please take into account in your revisions to HB2 that there are entities that are utilizing shared services for the benefit of society.

Thank you.