



Dr. Darlene Chambers  
President & CEO  
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Interested Party—HB 2 & SB148

Thank you Chairman Hite, Ranking member Sawyer, and members of the Senate Finance Subcommittee on Education for allowing me to provide testimony on House Bill 2 and Senate Bill 148.

My name is Dr. Darlene Chambers and I am the President and CEO of the Ohio Alliance for Public Charter Schools. Our mission 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 commend the leaders in both chambers for introducing bills to address charter school reform. We are encouraged to see the bipartisan efforts to create these bills even as charter school reform in Ohio continues to be viewed as a divisive and partisan issue. Both sides are coming together through this legislation with agreement that a strong reform package is needed to ensure our state continues to offer quality educational options to parents and students.

OAPCS supports House Bill 2 and believes that it should be the sole vehicle for the charter reform package. House Bill 2 offers a solid foundation, while Senate Bill 148 provides some finishing touches. Because OAPCS is a membership organization, we must be a strong advocate for all of our members, who at times have distinct and differing opinions. Knowing that and consulting with our members, there are some provisions in House Bill 2 and Senate Bill 148 that we feel warrant further consideration. These provisions include:

- Sponsors using the 3% fee for only monitoring, oversight, and technical assistance.
  - This is very restrictive and it is unclear what exactly will fall into these categories. This could cause sponsors to be unable to be members of state and national associations and hinder a sponsor's ability to host conferences and engage in advocacy work. House Bill 2 addresses proper use of authorizer fees by requiring sponsors to disclose their expenditures.
- Prohibiting operators from leasing a building for an amount that exceeds Fair Market Value (FMV) by more than 5% and requiring the sponsor to verify this to be true.
  - FMV can be different from one building to another and it is very difficult to accurately assess FMV for certain purposes. Who verifies whether a sponsor is qualified to determine if the amount isn't more than 5% of FMV?



- Requiring the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) to be responsible for the oversight of operators and to monitor and evaluate the operators in a manner similar to that of sponsors as well as ranking them.
  - These provisions are unnecessary because we believe the operator performance evaluation responsibility is better served by the governing board who holds the operator contract and by the sponsor who monitors and holds a charter with the governing board. With the Sponsor Performance Review now in place at and being conducted by ODE, the capacity to perform the oversight roles with fidelity will be evaluated on an ongoing basis.

Significant aspects of Senate Bill 148 include newly added provisions around transparency regarding governing authorities and operators. It is important that parents know who serves on the board of their child's school. We concur that the bill's requirement that every school post the names of board members on the school's website is an important directive. Requiring ODE to annually publish the names and identifying information for all operators will also provide useful transparency for stakeholders. OAPCS has recently published our annual 2014-2015 Directory which provides transparent contact information for all Ohio charter schools, Ohio authorizers listing the schools they sponsor and operators listing the schools they have contracts with. The directory can be accessed at [www.oapcs.org](http://www.oapcs.org)

Another provision in Senate Bill 148 that is important to consider amending into House Bill 2 is the prohibition of "sponsor hopping" by requiring a certain level of school academic performance be met prior to entering into a contract with a new sponsor. We agree with the proposed language in Senate Bill 148 which reinstates House Bill 2 original language.

It is very important that a strong charter reform package be passed and signed prior to the General Assembly recessing for the summer. We have reached an important point in time in which all parties are actively engaged in meaningful discussion. Postponing action now and leaving the legislation to languish until fall could hinder the bipartisan efforts that have created these two bills.

In conclusion, let us be reminded 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 that 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 to sustain educational quality and choice for all families.

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