



**Testimony to House Education
March 4, 2015
The Ohio 8 Coalition**

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Chairman Hayes, Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the House Education Committee, on behalf of The Ohio 8 Coalition we appreciate the opportunity to submit written testimony related to House Bill 2. It is The Ohio 8 Coalition's goal to provide a unified school administrator and Union President perspective on issues that cut across components of not only House Bill 2 but similar provisions within the Executive Operating Budget related to charter school accountability and transparency.

The Ohio 8 Coalition is committed to supporting quality educational opportunities for all students in our communities. We believe that every parent deserves transparent access to school performance and financial information to support their efforts to make the best educational choices for their children. To this end, The Ohio 8 Coalition works to partner with high-performing charter schools within our communities in an effort to ensure that students, regardless of their school setting, are receiving a quality education. We believe that the following recommendations will further support these efforts.

While House Bill 2 and the charter school provisions included in the Executive Operating Budget (House Bill 64) will help bring greater accountability and transparency to Ohio's charter school laws, The Ohio 8 Coalition believes the legislation, particularly in HB 2, lacks specific information related to two critical areas—1) public audit requirements and 2) the process by which a closed charter school can reopen.

As a result, The Ohio 8 Coalition has the following recommendations.

First, establish requirements that charter school financial records be publicly audited and disclosed. Additionally, the Ohio 8 Coalition recommends the following requirements be established to further support charter school transparency.

1. Annual audit of the receipt, transfer, and expenditure of all public funds.
2. Name of board members to be made available online.
3. Name of Treasurer/CFO/Fiscal Agent to be made available online.
4. Disclosure of conflict of interest statements must be on file and made available online (financial disclosure statements).
5. Require the return of assets acquired with public dollars to the Local Educational Agencies.
6. Annual audit of student records.
7. Require teacher and administration salary schedules and total expenditures to be disclosed and made available online.

In order to ensure that parents have access to the information they need to make an informed choice regarding their child's education, we must first hold charter schools and traditional public schools to the same financial reporting and auditing standards. We believe that high-quality learning environments are more likely to exist in places where financial accountability and transparency is demanded.

Our second recommendation for HB 2 is that **additional requirements be established that prohibit a charter school from reopening under a new name with the same sponsor, operator, board, or treasurer.** Specifically, we recommend that a closed charter school be prohibited from reopening if any of the following are true:

- The new school has the same sponsor as the closed school;
- The new school has the same chief administrator as the closed school;
- Fifty percent or more of the governing authority of the new school consists of the same members that served on the governing authority of the closed school during that school's last year of operation; or
- Fifty percent or more of the teaching staff of the new school consists of the same individuals who were employed as teachers at the closed school during that school's last year of operation.

Under current law charter schools that close under a definition other than "permanent closure" are exempt from the limitations on reopening. In order to ensure that poorly performing charter schools that have closed for any reason do not reopen without making major administrative changes it is critical that we clarify the language of the law as outlined above.

Ultimately, increasing transparency and decreasing the uncertainty related to the stability of charter schools will help to drive innovation and partnerships that better serve taxpayers, students, and parents. Holding charter schools and traditional public schools to the same standards creates opportunities for partnerships that ensure all students, families, and communities can be successful.

We thank you for the opportunity to share these recommendations and look forward to continuing to help in any way we can as you work on this legislation.

The Ohio 8 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 help shape state education policy.