



Testimony for the Senate Education Finance Subcommittee

May 7, 2013

Good afternoon Chairman Gardner, Vice Chair Lehner, Ranking Minority Member Turner and members of the Senate Education Finance Subcommittee. My name is Robert Kilo and I am humbled and honored to represent Breakthrough Schools in Cleveland, Ohio. On behalf of our nearly 2000 students, 165 educators, 90 board members and hundreds of volunteers, thank you for your work to expand quality education for the children of Ohio and for the opportunity to testify today.

This is only my second Ohio budget in my professional capacity and I must say that I am amazed with all of the significant issues that you as public servants have to address not only in education but in all key aspects of our great state. Making sure every child in Ohio receives the best education possible is essential and our Breakthrough Schools are helping to make that a reality for our current students and for the many more we hope to serve. We are the highest rated group of community schools in Ohio and according to the recent University of Stanford CREDO report; we are now the #1 rated urban charter school network in the United States for student growth in reading and # 4 in growth in math. Within our network, we have the Intergenerational School, rated Excellent with Distinction or Excellent eight years in a row, Citizens Academy, one of most consistent high performing community schools in Ohio, The Entrepreneurship Academy (E Prep), the top-rated urban middle school in Ohio and Citizens Leadership Academy, which has the highest first year rating for any urban middle school in Ohio. There is no achievement gap in our schools. Our students, which are 97% minority and include 82% that qualify for the National School Lunch Program, are proving every year that with high expectations and no excuses, they can achieve anything and be the first in their families to graduate from college.

To serve more students with the kind of quality education mentioned earlier we do have a significant facilities need. Prior to this proposed budget, community schools in have not received facilities support in Ohio. We have had to raise millions of dollars to purchase and renovate closed schools buildings in Cleveland and to repurpose other unused properties. In the past we have raised over \$20 million and we recently launched a \$16 million New Schools Initiative: *Breakthrough Vision 2020/Building Cleveland's Future* so that we can meet our goal of 20 schools by 2020. We are incredibly grateful for the philanthropic support of many individuals and foundations,

family and corporate, yet we are concerned that without an additional state investment, our long term sustainability could be in jeopardy. Thankfully, HB 59 allocates \$100 per student to community schools for facilities. Based on national research, we believe other states invest more in facilities for their charter schools and we would like to see the total investment in Ohio to be at least \$300 per student. This would help us replicate and serve more students as soon as possible.

We also applaud the Governor and his team for including the Straight A Fund as a significant piece of the overall education budget. We are a network of schools that set our academic standards high, seek out meaningful collaboration with other education stakeholders and are innovative at our core. We would like to see the original appropriation for the Straight A Fund restored to \$300 million and the caps lifted. This would help schools like ours and other successful and innovative schools compete to make sure the Governor's goal of spreading *Achievement Everywhere* is accomplished in an accelerated manner.

In closing, I would like to thank the Senate Education Finance Subcommittee for the opportunity to testify today. I would also like to thank other quality education stakeholders who have testified today and during this budget process. With continued focus on what is best for our children and engaging in meaningful dialogue with civility, I believe the best is yet to come for education in Ohio. With that, I am happy to answer any questions you may have.