

CHARTER COMMITTEE POSITION ON CINCINNATI PUBLIC SCHOOLS LEVY

The Charter Committee has endorsed and will support the proposed Cincinnati Public Schools 9.95 mill, 5 year operating levy, which will generate \$65.3 million per year for the schools.

By endorsing this levy, Charter is supporting education of the children of Cincinnati. We also firmly believe that strong public schools are essential for a strong city. However, along with this support, we demand much greater accountability from the School Board and School Administration to the parents, the citizens and the children of Cincinnati.

Cincinnati Public Schools have made tremendous gains in student achievement at many schools. As a comprehensive school district, all of the students in the district need to share in those gains. Cincinnati Public Schools need to implement some structural changes in the way it operates, and in the way it asks the citizens to approve tax levies. There is a demonstrated need for a district wide measurement of performance and a demonstrated need for accountability for deficiencies in that performance. The School Board needs to reinstitute the quarterly "Report Card" explaining the status of each school in the areas of student achievement, attendance, and financial accountability.

We understand that many School Board members are on the Board because of their concern for Cincinnati's children. This is commendable, but not nearly enough. It is not acceptable that the Board allowed financial assumptions to be made that were unrealistic, or that the Board did not require that the administration be responsible to it and spend only in accordance with the budget approved by the Board. The Board has obtained outside studies to improve its business model, including the recent McKinsey Report. It is time to put the findings of these studies into action, including: better use of available technology; improvement in the hiring of appropriate personnel; and improvement in accountability of district staff, once they are hired. The Board began a process of merit pay for teachers and administration years ago. The 'baby steps' taken in this area have not resulted in enough change to the status quo and this is not satisfactory.

The job of educating our students can be difficult and demanding. The Board must direct the administration to find ways to attract and keep young, energetic faculty and it must continue its efforts at professional development. Effective teaching must be rewarded. In addition, greater parent involvement in the education of the children must be emphasized and demanded.

Finally, the Charter Committee recommends that an independent advisory panel be instituted to focus on the finances of the school district. This panel would serve a function similar to the Tax Levy Review Commission appointed by the Hamilton County Board of Commissioners. 12 months prior to the Board seeking a new/renewal of a levy, the Board would commission the financial review panel to study the performance of the district and the need for the levy request. The Board would submit the proposed budget

each year to this panel and the Board and Treasurer would explain and justify to the panel the proposed assumptions on which the budget is based.

Progress has been made in Cincinnati Public Schools over the last several years. A successful public school system is necessary for Cincinnati to be a thriving city. A failed school system cannot be an option. Therefore the Charter Committee urges the citizens of Cincinnati to vote for the levy. Passage of the levy should be linked to a rejection of the status quo and a demand for a better, more accountable school district, a district that is a good steward of our tax dollars.

Michael Goldman, President
The Charter Committee