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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ohio Senate Refuses to Leave 88,000 Children Behind

What would have been the reaction if Governor Strickland's education plan and budget proposals called for massive funding cuts for Akron, Toledo and Cincinnati district public schools? Cuts in funding that would have severely jeopardized the education of their 86,000 children. There would have been jaw-dropping disbelief and massive outrage. Believe it or not, that's exactly what the governor did to 88,000 students in Ohio's public charter schools.

The nightmare for over 300 public charter schools, their students and parents began January 28th when Governor Strickland delivered his State-of-the-State speech and outlined his three year old campaign promise – to produce a new education plan. It was on that day that the governor proclaimed that *his Evidence-Based Education Plan* would transform the face of public education in Ohio.

Unfortunately, upon closer examination it became apparent that Strickland's plan was untested, loaded with unfunded mandates, complicated funding ratios and new business models for schools that had little to do with educating children or help close the achievement gap. The plan was big, bold, complicated, and very expensive. And by coincidence, his plan just happened to dramatically slash funding of charter schools that are already significantly underfunded when compared to traditional public schools.

In an effort to support the cost of his new education plan Governor Strickland used billions of one-time federal stimulus dollars, cleaned out all of Ohio's billion dollar rainy-day funds and completely ignored shrinking tax revenues and the huge budget deficit Ohio was facing.

Even the governor's own political party was aware of the criticisms from school superintendents and the media. So the House majority 'held their noses' and promised to fix most of the problems. They labored over the budget for three months....added over half a billion dollars in additional new spending and declared it an *improved version* of the Governor's plan. But unfortunately, the House version also forgot to protect those 88,000 children in charter schools.

The House of Representatives then sent their *new improved* version of the education plan and budget bill to the Senate and within two days the Governor's budget director announced that there was a one-billion dollar hole in the current budget. Since then, the Strickland administration has announced another \$3.2 billion loss of revenue.

State law requires that a balanced biennium budget bill must be signed by the Governor no later than June 30th. The Governor spent three years crafting his plan, mostly behind closed doors with private attorneys and lobbyists. Then House Democrats took another three months to rewrite it. That left the Senate with barely three weeks to fix an unproven, unsustainable education plan and a growing budget deficit.

Senator Husted said, "while the governor's plan was touted as being student-centered it had far more to do with adding layers of staffing and unfunded mandates that would do little to help educate children. The governor's budget was a billion dollars out of balance and would require funding levels that are unsustainable".

Senate President Harris and members of his leadership team like Senator Carey and Senator Wagoner said they could not support the Governor's plan because it was fiscally irresponsible and would discriminate against the students in 330 charter schools.

The parents of 88,000 charter school students thank members of the Ohio Senate for doing the *right thing* by not leaving their children behind -- and for believing that all children in Ohio's charter schools need and deserve their support as well.

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The Ohio Coalition for Quality Education represents Ohio's 330 public charter schools and students.