



# OAKMONT EDUCATION

OAKMONT EDUCATION PULSE: NAVIGATING EXCELLENCE IN CREDIT RECOVERY & ADVANCEMENT

## A Proud Moment for Oakmont Education—and a Powerful Message for Our Students

Last week marked a defining and deeply emotional moment for Oakmont Education as our **Vice President, Cris Gulacy-Worrel**, testified before the U.S. Senate HELP Committee during National School Choice Week—an experience she described as one of the most surreal moments of her life.

In her testimony, Cris centered the conversation on what truly matters: students and families. Educational choice, she shared, is about the more than 5,500 learners Oakmont serves each year across Ohio, Iowa, and Michigan—young people who have too often been underestimated, overlooked, or failed by traditional systems. It's about parents who wake up every day advocating fiercely for their children's futures, and about students who prove, day after day, what becomes possible when someone believes in them and provides the right tools to succeed.

Cris spoke about educational choice as a commitment to putting power back in the hands of families—whether they choose traditional schools, charter schools, homeschooling, or alternative pathways like Oakmont's, which weave together academics with real-world career preparation. These students' voices, experiences, and potential deserve to be at the center of our national conversation about education.

What made the moment especially powerful was knowing that **Oakmont students were watching live from their classrooms across the network**. As Cris reflected on her own journey—from being taken from her bed in the middle of the night at 17 to testifying before the U.S. Senate as an expert in her field—students saw undeniable proof that where you start does not have to be where you end. The message was clear and visible in real time: the sky is the limit.

Cris closed with gratitude—for her family, her mentors, and her colleagues who stand beside her in this work. We are incredibly proud of her leadership and authenticity, and even more proud of the students she represents so fiercely. This moment affirmed what Oakmont believes every day: when students are trusted, supported, and given real options, extraordinary things happen. Watch the hearing here: <https://www.help.senate.gov/hearings/empowering-families-through-educational-choice-in-america>



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## Highlighting Opportunity in Action: Governor Reynolds Visits Great Oaks

As part of School Choice Week, Great Oaks High School and Career Center was proud to welcome **Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds** to campus. Her visit included a school tour and media event that highlighted the impact of public charter schools across Iowa. Ahead of announcing a proposed bill to improve funding equity for public charter schools, Governor Reynolds spent meaningful time with Great Oaks students and staff, learning firsthand about their experiences and successes.

During her visit, Governor Reynolds toured Great Oaks' Construction Trades, Advanced Manufacturing, and Healthcare pathways, where she heard powerful stories from students whose lives have been transformed through flexible, relationship-based learning and career-focused education. Students shared reflections on perseverance, second chances, and the importance of learning environments that truly support them. One student spoke about earning \$20 an hour through a manufacturing internship and being on track to graduate early after once believing graduation was out of reach. Another shared how earning a full year's worth of core credits in just one year has put them on a path toward a future career in healthcare.

In addition to exploring career pathways, Governor Reynolds learned more about Coalition YouthBuild, a U.S. Department of Labor-funded initiative operated by Great Oaks in partnership with Des Moines Area Community College and Iowa Jobs for America's Graduates. Coalition YouthBuild serves opportunity youth through integrated education, hands-on career training, leadership development, and wraparound support—creating clear pathways to credentials, employment, and postsecondary success.

Governor Reynolds praised the progress Great Oaks has made since opening in 2024 and emphasized the role public charter schools play in providing students with flexible learning environments, strong relationships, and real-world opportunities. She noted that expanding school choice helps ensure students have access to options that align with their unique needs, goals, and futures—rather than being limited to a single traditional path.

This visit was a proud moment for our students, staff, and partners, and it affirmed the work happening across the Oakmont Education network to expand access, opportunity, and positive outcomes for students every day.

Learn more about the Governor's visit here:

<https://www.wgem.com/2026/01/30/iowa-governor-proposes-new-funding-bill-public-charter-schools/>

