

**Written Testimony to the Ohio House of Representatives Education and Career Readiness  
Committee**

From Caroline Cain, John Clonkin, Jordan Hutchinson, and Amy Tran

University of Cincinnati

November 11, 2017

RE: House Bill 200: Education, Education: Primary and Secondary Education

Sponsor: Representative Koehler

Co-Sponsors: Representatives Rezabek, Brenner, Dean, Conditt, Goodman, Merrin, and  
Huffman

Dear Chairman Brenner and members of the House Education and Career Readiness Committee:

We thank you for the opportunity to submit a written testimony to the Committee in opposition of HB200 as it examines the expansion of the Ohio Opportunity Scholarship program. We are students at the University of Cincinnati enrolled in an honors seminar, "Save Our Schools! Education Controversy and Change." During this course, we have analyzed a variety educational issues central to improving schools, including school vouchers. As a result of our studies, we urge you to make key revisions to this bill in order to ensure equity in our schools.

As written, HB 200 would enable students to use the opportunity scholarship to pay all or part of the cost of tuition and fees for the student to attend a chartered nonpublic school. For students and families who are unable to pay the remaining tuition and fees, the chartered nonpublic school must provide volunteer service opportunities, in lieu of cash to pay all or part of the school's tuition not covered by the scholarship.

While we appreciate the intent and effort to provide every student in Ohio with the opportunity to attend any chartered nonpublic school, we recommend that the Committee reinstate the tuition cap. That is, the chartered nonpublic school may not charge more than the amount of the voucher. By providing volunteer services in lieu of cash to pay all or part of the school's tuition not covered by the scholarship, families and students would become "indebted" to schools, which would inevitably create class segregation within schools.

In addition, by capping the cost of the tuition at the amount of the voucher, wealthier families will be unable to supplement tuition. When Chile transitioned to a "free-market" education system in 1981, their universal voucher program allowed families substantial choice in any participating school. Chile's voucher program has been shown to largely exacerbate inequality and reduce public school enrollment, while having minimal to no impact on student achievement. We worry that with the elimination of the tuition cap for students receiving

vouchers, Ohio's families and schools will become increasingly segregated both socio-economically and racially.

Furthermore, under the new bill, the State Board and the Department of Education may not require chartered nonpublic schools to comply with any education laws, rules, or other requirements that are not specified under the bill's provisions. While we understand that to require chartered nonpublic schools to comply with any education laws or rules would no longer make these institutions private, we do believe that schools accepting the opportunity scholarship must submit to some regulations. We propose that any school accepting public vouchers must meet all academic standards as outlined by the state, test all students to ensure the school is high quality, publish academic statistics, and disclose financial records, with respect to the vouchers.

If chartered nonpublic schools receive state monies through the Ohio Opportunity Scholarship, we believe the school must be held to the same academic standard as public schools. In addition, we propose that by only testing students on the opportunity scholarship, the school and state are further segregating students receiving public assistance. The publishing of academic statistics of chartered nonpublic schools receiving vouchers can help with research on the relationship between vouchers and students' achievement, which in turn can provide evidence of the voucher program's overall success. This would provide accountability and ensure that taxpayer dollars are going to high-quality schools and that taxpayers know where their money is being spent.

We believe that providing an equal and equitable education to all students living in Ohio should be a top priority. Every student in Ohio should have access to a high-quality education, we must consider how expanding the Ohio Opportunity Scholarship could advantage some while disadvantaging others. We believe that as written, HB 200 would further segregate students along social, economic, and racial lines, and we urge this Committee to take our revisions to HB 200 under consideration.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony. Should you have any questions or require any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Respectfully,

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