

## Interested Party Testimony – May 15, 2019

Good afternoon Chairperson Terhar, Vice Chair Lehner, Ranking Member Fedor, and other members of the Senate Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education. My name is Troy McIntosh and I am the Head of School at Worthington Christian School, a 920-student school on the north side of Columbus that serves 147 students using an EdChoice Scholarship. We have been a participating school in the program since its inception in 2006. In 2016, we were named a National Blue Ribbon School for Exemplary High Performance. Our standardized test scores at every grade level place us well within the top 15% of all schools nationwide in both reading and math. The EdChoice Scholarship program has successfully opened access to Worthington Christian for hundreds of students that otherwise would not have been able to attend. We wish to remain a partner school in this program. However, without the legislative clarification that we are seeking today, our ongoing participation in the program is not likely to be viable. Without the participation of high quality schools such as Worthington Christian, the effectiveness and value of the EdChoice program would be severely diminished.

The problem that we believe needs remedied is that administrative rules, that have only recently begun to be applied, require that schools distribute financial aid to EdChoice recipient families prior to the awarding of the EdChoice scholarship. If a family qualifies for a substantial amount of aid such that the remaining balance of tuition is less than the EdChoice Scholarship, then the scholarship would be reduced to that amount. Since 47 of our EdChoice recipient students qualify as low-income, we estimate that this could result in at least a \$125,000 reduction in EdChoice Scholarship money available to our students. This massive shift in the burden of funding the program to our school's financial aid budget, which already provides over \$300,000 in aid to EdChoice families, is not sustainable, nor was it the intent of the legislation.

Current administrative rules have overstepped their legislative authority and create conflicting standards on how to calculate EdChoice Scholarship amount. OAC 3301-11-10 dictates that schools must first apply their own financial aid awards prior to determining what is the tuition submitted to ODE. However, this administrative rule is in conflict with the EdChoice law as described in ORD 3310.08, which states, "*The amount paid for an eligible student under the educational choice scholarship pilot program shall be the lesser of the tuition of the chartered nonpublic school in which the student is enrolled or the maximum amount prescribed in section 3310.09 of the Revised Code.*" Nowhere does the legislative code specify that financial aid must first be applied prior to determining the amount of the scholarship.

This administrative overreach will have a severe impact on participating schools and, more importantly, on the students who attend them using an EdChoice Scholarship, so we are asking that clarifying language be made to Sec. 3310.08. (A) so that it reads, "*The amount paid for an eligible student under the educational choice scholarship pilot program shall be the lesser of the tuition of the chartered nonpublic school in which the student is enrolled, prior to financial aid received by the student, or the maximum amount prescribed in section 3310.09 of the Revised Code.*"

This action would allow Worthington Christian and other high quality schools to remain partners in the EdChoice program. Thank you for your consideration and the work you do on behalf of Ohio's schoolchildren.