

Ohio Catholic School Superintendents

Interested party testimony /HB 110 (biennial budget bill)

Senate Finance Committee

Monday, May 17, 2021 10:00 am

Good morning Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Sykes and Committee Members. My name is Susan Gibbons. I am the chairperson for the Catholic school superintendents and superintendent of Catholic schools for the Archdiocese of Cincinnati.

Also here today are the Catholic school superintendents from each of the other five Catholic dioceses of Columbus, Cleveland, Steubenville, Toledo and Youngstown.

Catholic schools are the largest non-profit education provider in Ohio, serving more than 108,000 students enrolled in 369 Catholic schools, 85% of which enroll Title I eligible students. Approximately one in five students qualifies as economically disadvantaged. Our racial makeup is equivalent to Ohio's, with 28% of pupils identifying as racial minorities, including 13.2% Black and 6.2% Latino students. We are the largest of the chartered nonpublic school options, which educate about 10% of Ohio's K-12 students.

It has been an incredible year. Just 14 months ago, debates raged in this building about eligibility for Ed Choice, the state's largest scholarship program. The result, despite everyone's best intentions, is that for two school years now families and schools have grappled with uncertainty and confusion as they plan for their children's education.

Soon after, COVID-19 challenged all of us and still does. Following the order to lock down after March 16, Catholic schools were providing remote instruction the following day. Since September, Catholic schools

have labored to provide families safe, in-person environments for students to attend as well as the option to learn remotely. This extraordinary undertaking was only possible with the cooperation of local health authorities and the support of the community. Our schools are directly accountable to the parents and guardians of the families we serve, all taxpaying citizens of Ohio.

I invite Frank O’Linn of the Diocese of Cleveland to continue our testimony.

Increasing Scholarship Amounts in State Scholarship Programs

In H. B. 110, the Ohio House includes the long-studied plan for public education funding, a laudable, historic step. As with any budget, it presents a challenge: how to balance it by prioritizing areas of importance efficiently for all stakeholders.

The designers of the formula have done thorough, thoughtful work – for public districts. The school funding workgroup, which included no representatives from nonpublic schools, proposed a model based on inputs that when fully implemented would add \$2.0 billion to the district’s education expenditures that are now over \$21 billion per year, \$11 billion of which is provided by the state.

For all of the proposed investment in education, no addition is proposed for the state’s school choice scholarships, which have not increased for years, and this year enabled more than 71,000 students to attend nonpublic schools efficiently, and with outstanding results.

For the plan to be worthy of its authors’ claim to be “fair to all students and fair to all taxpayers,” we believe the next school funding model must:

- 1. Increase the maximum dollar amounts awarded per pupil in the Cleveland and EdChoice scholarship programs to at least \$6,000 K-8 and \$8,000 9-12, or higher.**

- 2. Ensure the Autism and Jon Peterson Special Needs scholarships' per-pupil funding amounts grow commensurate with increases in special education funding .**
- 3. Increase the appropriation for EdChoice Expansion to restore it at or near FY 21 levels . Newly increased from 200% to 250% of poverty levels, this is still the first full year for grades 7-12 to be eligible, and we expect more newly eligible families to adopt the scholarship .**
- 4. Ensure that as public school students receive additional state funding based on formulas or other calculations, students on state-sponsored scholarships are treated fairly by receiving the same percentage increases.**

Please allow me to introduce Mary Fiala of the Diocese of Youngstown to complete our testimony .

Auxiliary Services and Administrative Cost Reimbursement

Please support funding levels for Auxiliary Services and Administrative Cost Reimbursement as approved by the House .

Auxiliary Services always has been essential in providing instructional materials, textbooks, speech and hearing services, remediation and special education services for Catholic and other chartered nonpublic school students .

As Catholic schools continue their outreach to at-risk students on state-sponsored scholarships, Auxiliary Services are arguably more important now than any time since the program was established in 1966-67⁷

We support the permissive language in the House budget for Catholic and other religious chartered nonpublic schools to have the option of receiving direct state aid from Auxiliary Services .

School Transportation

We support the provisions in the House budget for school transportation, including but not limited to the following:

Transportation plans, containing routes and schedules provided by a reasonable date; student arrival and departure no more than an hour before or after the school day; preventing K-8 students from being required to travel on mass transit.

In addition, we request an additional provision -- increasing the payment in lieu of transportation in the case of impracticality from the current \$ 250 to at least the state average, currently \$1,077.

Conclusion

Catholic schools continue to deliver for Ohio and yet continue to battle uphill when advocating for resources for pupils, their families, and their schools.

We implore the finance committee to ensure that Ohio's next budget considers the benefits and opportunities for all of Ohio, including those who elect to attend nonpublic schools such as our Catholic schools.

At this time, we would be pleased to answer any questions.

Susan Gibbons, Archdiocese of Cincinnati

Adam Dufault, Diocese of Columbus

Frank O'Linn, Diocese of Cleveland

Paul Ward, Diocese of Steubenville

Matt Daniels, Diocese of Toledo

Mary Fiala, Diocese of Youngstown

Appendix

Race	Catholic Schools (OCSAA)	Public Schools (ODE Headcount)
White, Non-Hispanic	72.3%	71.4%
Black, Non-Hispanic	13.2%	16.1
Hispanic	6.2%	6.5%
Asian or Pacific Islander	2.0%	2.6
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0.14%	.1
Multiracial	5.2%	5.8%
Not Specified	0.79%	