



HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE – Interested Party Testimony, House Bill 33, 4.20.23

Chairman Edwards, Vice Chair LaRe, Ranking Member Sweeney and members of the committee, thank you for holding this hearing and for the opportunity to provide testimony. My name is Donovan O’Neil, and I serve as the State Director for the Ohio chapter of Americans for Prosperity (AFP). My organization’s mission is to empower every American to pursue their version of the American Dream. As the premier grassroots advocacy organization, we are working to transform the public policy landscape towards reforms that will advance freedom and liberty for all. Because Americans are capable of extraordinary things when we give them the freedom to do so.

Today I would like to provide thoughts and commentary on two key components of Ohio’s biennial operating budget, a budget that makes mediocre changes and falls far short of moving Ohio towards that transformational, bold future that will enable all Ohioans to achieve their version of the American Dream.

Beginning with school choice, I will say as I did in the Primary & Secondary Education Subcommittee that while the Governor’s expansion of EdChoice eligibility to 400% of the federal poverty level, and this committee’s recent further expansion to 450% are commendable steps in the right direction, they fall far short of the bold, transformational reforms your constituents deserve and other states are delivering on for their students.

If you were to leave the Statehouse today and travel only two and half hours south down U.S. Route 23 to Huntington, WV, you would discover that one of Ohio’s neighboring states has already taken several steps ahead by implementing a universal educational savings account (ESA) approach to education delivery through its [Hope Scholarship](#). In the past several months, other states such as Arizona, Iowa, Utah, Arkansas, and Florida (with bipartisan support) have done the same. Universal school choice is an idea whose time has come, and it will help students, families and employers around this state better meet their unique needs in an ever evolving, rapidly changing world.

It should not matter if a family or household is at 250%, 450%, 500%, 1,000% or even 10,000% of FPL. In Ohio, the ability to access an individualized education experience as unique as the student should not be means tested or depend on that family living in a failing community – as

the status quo is today. Education opportunity should be available to all students, in all communities. Everywhere. Before sending HB 33 to the House floor, Americans for Prosperity Ohio would strongly urge this committee to reconsider its approach and accomplish universal eligibility for Ohio's students.

Continuing with tax policy, and similar to AFP's point of view regarding education policy, HB 33 falls short of the mark, and it even falls short of this chamber's stated priorities. Typically a reduction in brackets would be commendable. But we are at a point in the 50 years since the Personal Income Tax was enacted where reform needs to be about setting a bold vision for the future of Ohio.

The flat tax at a rate of 2.75% proposed in House Bill 1 is the type of bold vision that would ensure ALL Ohioans pay the same flat rate. And more importantly [position future general assemblies](#) to advance Ohio to pay a same flat rate of 0%.

Shortly after this committee accepted the substitute version of HB 33, AFP circulated a [coalition letter](#) to the General Assembly stating our support for a 2.75% flat tax policy, which is in alignment with the House's stated top priority. A flat tax rate of 2.75% would be the [second lowest state personal income tax rate](#) in the country behind only Arizona. Ohio took in \$6 billion more than expected by the end of the last fiscal year and can afford to tackle major tax reform, which will make Ohio a more attractive state for workers, businesses, and investors, which will only further spur economic growth and improve quality of life.

Pursuing policies of a flat income tax and universal school choice are fair and reasonable approaches because they afford opportunity to all and affect people at an equal rate. When I travel this state – AFP Ohio has staff in Dayton, Perrysburg, Cuyahoga County, Steubenville, and at points between – to attend events with activists and community members, these are issues that affect them directly and that are highly personal. People deeply care about their children's futures and their families' financial prospects. Please prioritize them, your constituents, during this Budget by reducing and eliminating barriers to opportunity and success so that ALL Ohioans can have the best possible chance to thrive. And ultimately, achieve their version of the American Dream.

Thank you again, Chairman, for the opportunity to convey this message to the committee, and I would be happy to do my best to answer any questions the committee might have.

Americans for Prosperity (AFP) exists to recruit, educate, and mobilize citizens in support of the policies and goals of a free society at the local, state, and federal level, helping every American live their dream – especially the least fortunate. AFP has more than 3.2 million activists across the nation, a local infrastructure that includes 36 state chapters, and has received financial support from more than 100,000 Americans in all 50 states. For more information, visit www.AmericansForProsperity.org.