



**Representative Sean Patrick Brennan**  
**14<sup>th</sup> House District**  
**Serving Parma, Parma Heights, and Cleveland's West Park**

SPONSOR TESTIMONY: HB 462

4-24-24

Chair Young, Vice-Chair Manning, Ranking Member Miller, and members of the House Committee on Higher Education. Thank you for allowing my fellow University of Dayton Flyer alumnus Rep. Troy and I to present to you House Bill 462. House Bill 462 will reinstate the Ohio Student Choice Grant Program, which was created by the 115<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in 1983 and, sadly, repealed by the 128<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in 2009, due to the state budget crunch. But times are much different now in our prosperous state.

Like its predecessor, H.B. 462 will invest millions of dollars in Ohioans who wish to attend private, nonprofit institutions of higher learning. The Chancellor of Higher Education will determine the program parameters and administer it. Eligibility includes being an Ohio resident for at least two years prior to applying for the grant, enrollment as a fulltime student in a bachelor's degree program at an eligible institution, and maintaining an academic record that meets the standard determined by the Chancellor.

Ohio residents attending public institutions of higher learning are eligible for significantly reduced tuition, as well as other financial aid programs that are not available to Ohio students attending private schools of higher learning.

As a student at U.D. from 1988 to 1992, **I was a recipient of the Choice Grant**. In fact, thanks, in part, to the Choice Grant, I was able to continue my Catholic education into my college years **in my home state**, as U.D. is a Catholic, Marianist institution. I am the son of a single mother who lost our house, hesitantly applied for public assistance, and moved us into a trailer park as a result of my father abandoning us and refusing to pay a dime of child support. The Choice Grant was a welcome supplement to the various financial need and academic scholarships, including the federal Pell Grant, that I received, and the money I made holding down multiple jobs throughout each year to pay my tuition at U.D. In fact, let me take this opportunity to thank my predecessors in the General Assembly and, more importantly, the Ohio taxpayers, **who invested in me by investing in the Choice program**. Thanks, in part to them, I was able to afford college, go on to serve thousands of middle and high school students as an American History and Government teacher for three decades, and now serve the people I love back home in Parma, Parma Heights, and Cleveland, and all of Ohio's nearly 12 million souls as a member of the 135<sup>th</sup> General Assembly.

**Committees:**

State and Local Government  
-Ranking Member  
Pensions  
Primary and Secondary Education  
Public Utilities  
Ways & Means

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Colleagues, my life is proof that the American – the Ohio - dream is still alive. I still cannot believe how far I've come from dumpster diving in the trailer park and being called “white trash” when my proud mom would take us a couple of towns over to buy food at the grocery store because food stamps back in the day were coupons you tore out of a booklet, so everyone in line knew you were on welfare.

On a related note, our smaller, private, not-for-profit institutions of higher learning are finding it more and more difficult to stay afloat. The recent announcement that Notre Dame College in South Euclid will be closing is a harbinger of a looming crisis that this bill will help address. Imagine the devastation to a small community, like Berea, Ohio, if its biggest employer and taxpayer (Baldwin-Wallace University) closes its doors. These colleges are not just educational institutions, but economic development drivers, creating thousands of jobs and having an important positive economic impact on the communities in which they exist and, collectively, on the state of Ohio. Therefore, by investing in the Choice Grant, we are not only investing in our students, but in our communities and state.

Today, this General Assembly has the power to invest in thousands of more hard working Ohio learners, like I was, who wish to attend a private college of their choice and reside in Ohio to fulfill their respective dreams and enhance Ohio's economy.

By supporting H.B. 462 we can do our part to make the private college option for Ohio's residents more affordable, turn the brain-drain into a brain-gain and brain-retain, and support our local communities. Thank you for your consideration.

