

Ohio House Primary and Secondary Education Committee
Testimony of Melanie Elsey ~ H.B. 11
April 25, 2023

Chairman Bird, Vice-Chair Fowler Arthur, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to share concerns with HB 11. My name is Melanie Elsey.

I serve as the Legislative Director for the American Policy Roundtable and also as the Legislative Liaison for Christian Home Educators of Ohio. As you are aware, this legislation is intended to expand opportunities for educational choice for all Ohio school children.

Offering options for families being served through the public and private educational system is an important component of state policy. And I sincerely appreciate the intent behind the expansion of these options in HB 11.

My concerns are as follows:

Home educating families should not be recipients of state funds through the General Revenue Fund. These families value their freedom to direct and provide educational opportunities for their children without working through parameters set by state contractual agreements, state approved vendors, or conditions set for fiscal accountability to the state.

This is different from the opportunities home educated students currently have to access programs available to other students (Jon Peterson scholarship or College Credit Plus). In these programs the funding is distributed to state approved providers. I'm referring to the directing of funds to the student.

There are sections in HB 11 that refer to home educated students (conceptually) in three different ways - enrolled, excused, and exempt. This will create confusion in state policy. At the same time there are provisions within the bill that conflict with Ohio's current regulations governing home educated families. These details would necessitate a redrafting of state regulations that have been stable for decades.

We believe it would be much better to expand the program for EdChoice that is already in place. If the General Assembly would like to assist families who home educate, it would be much better to expand the tax credit established two years ago and allow these families to keep more of their own resources for use in educating their children.

Thank you for your consideration of these concerns.