



Opponent Testimony for House Bill 11
House Primary and Secondary Education Committee

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Chair Bird, Vice Chair Fowler Arthur, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide opponent testimony against House Bill 11.

[Honesty for Ohio Education](#) is a nonpartisan, statewide coalition representing more than [50](#) organizational partners advocating for every student’s right to receive an honest, high-quality education grounded in truth, facts, and diverse perspectives, regardless of their race, identity, income, or zip code. We believe that public school students are best positioned to receive this education when districts are fully and equitably funded and educators are fully resourced, trained, and supported. The delivery of an honest, high-quality public education to all children is foundational to our country’s promise of liberty and opportunity for all.

In Ohio, the state constitution requires the legislature to fund a “thorough and efficient” public education system that serves the common good. Since the adoption of the Ohio Constitution in 1851, the state legislature has been responsible for ensuring the revenue sources, distribution method, and balance between state and local sources are fully and equitably funding school districts across Ohio. Despite this constitutional mandate, in 1997, the Ohio Supreme Court ruled that Ohio's public school funding method was unconstitutional, inequitable, and overly reliant on property valuation. To date, the Ohio legislature has yet to meet its funding obligation for public education.

Compounding Ohio’s decades of unconstitutional school funding, House Bill 11 exacerbates this deficit by forcing taxpayers to subsidize private school tuition with state dollars that should fund public education. Instead of moving Ohio closer to a constitutionally funded public education system, HB 11 redirects millions of state dollars away from public schools to fund private schools. These schools are allowed to discriminate in their admissions process, are unaccountable and unregulated by the state, and cause particular harm in Ohio’s rural and urban communities. Not only does HB 11 endanger already underfunded, impoverished public

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school districts, it forces Ohio taxpayers to fund private schools that many Ohio students cannot attend.

Because of the highly selective, discriminatory admission policies used by private schools, those schools participating in HB 11's Education Savings Account (ESA) program will be determining which Ohio students are educated with public dollars. This admission process allows private schools to reject students based on their academic performance, ability status, religious beliefs, sexuality, and gender identity. Meanwhile, public schools funded with public dollars are open to all students, abilities, beliefs, and identities.

More concerning, HB 11 lacks any oversight, regulation, or checks and balances over private education, failing to ensure that public funds are being used to provide an honest, inclusive, comprehensive education that benefits the common good. Because of minimal reporting requirements and even less publicly available data, it is extremely difficult for the state to protect the interests of the students attending private schools.

Further, there is little publicly available data demonstrating that Education Savings Accounts and voucher programs actually improve education quality or student outcomes. When public school students use ESA or voucher programs, it rarely reduces costs, but does immediately reduce public school funding and enrollment. This damages opportunities for the remaining majority of public school students.

At significant risk of harm from HB 11 are Ohio rural communities where private school options directly funded by HB 11 are starkly absent. House Bill 11 will force rural communities to redirect needed public funds away from their own public schools to fund ESA's for faraway private schools that their students cannot attend.

We urge you to vote NO on House Bill 11 and similar efforts to divest public funds away from public education. Instead of directing valuable public funds and resources toward privatized Education Savings Accounts that serve a fraction of Ohioans, please focus efforts on strengthening Ohio public education with research-based strategies that improve all student outcomes.

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