

Proponent Testimony on H.B. 407  
Primary and Secondary Education Committee  
Chair: Gayle Manning  
Vice Chair: Sarah Fowler Arthur  
Ranking Member: Phillip M. Robinson, Jr.

Submitted by: Dr. William Benninger and Patty Benninger

Chair Manning, Vice Chair Fowler Arthur, Ranking Member Robinson, thank you for the opportunity to submit proponent testimony for HB 407. My name is Patty Benninger. I am a retired teacher with over 40 years of experience. My husband is a retired psychologist who has worked with children with ADHD. We have two adult daughters who went through 12 years of Primary and Secondary Education in public schools, and they both were very well prepared for college coursework.

The voucher expansion applications have grown from 21, 312 scholarships awarded in 2022 to 87,312 scholarships as of March 18.

(<https://ohiocapitaljournal.com/2024/03/21/more-than-91000-have-applied-for-ohio-private-school-voucher-expansion/#:~:text=Out%20of%2091%2C157%20voucher%20expansion,end%20of%20the%20fiscal%20year.>) The program was estimated to cost \$397.8 million by the Legislative Services Commission, and has already cost close to \$400 million. This cost will continue to increase as parents have until the end of June to submit voucher applications. With this taxpayer investment, we need oversight of the spending of tax dollars. Public school districts are subject to fiscal accountability. HB 407 states that each chartered nonpublic school must submit annually to the Department of Education a state expenditure report. This requirement would provide a more transparent system of the spending of tax dollars by chartered nonpublic schools.

Some of the chartered nonpublic schools can refuse admission to a student with disciplinary records or a student with a poor academic record. Since public schools admit students with these records, they are referred to as the “Statue of Liberty of Education” (<https://www.cincinnati.com/story/news/2020/08/19/private-school-ohio-vouchers/5399188002/>). HB 407 provides some oversight of chartered nonpublic admission procedures.

One of the most important provisions of HB 407 is to require the Department of Education and Workforce to establish a report card for chartered nonpublic schools, similar to the state report card issued for public schools. There is evidence that public schools out-perform nonpublic schools. A Cincinnati Enquirer analysis found that in 88% of the Ohio.

cities in their review, public schools achieved better standardized test results than private schools with an address in the same city.

(<https://www.cincinnati.com/story/news/2020/08/19/private-school-ohio-vouchers/5399188002/>). By requiring report cards for chartered nonpublic schools, parents could have a better comparison of how those schools perform academically.

HB 407 requires that chartered nonpublic students meet the same graduation requirements as public school students. This would allow colleges to be assured that the graduations requirements are consistent.

I would strongly urge members of this committee to support HB 407. Ohio citizens want all students to excel and requiring that chartered nonpublic school students meet the provisions in HB 407 would meet these high educational standards.

Thank you.

Dr. William Benninger  
Patty Benninger