



## HOUSE PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

House Bill 407  
Proponent Testimony

May 21, 2024

Chair Manning, Vice Chair Fowler Arthur, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill (HB) 407. My name is Katie Johnson and I serve as the Executive Director of the Ohio Association of School Business Officials (OASBO), a professional association that represents public school district treasurers/CFOs, business managers, and other school business officials from around the state.

Joining me today for this testimony and in answering your questions are several OASBO members, including Bill Wade, CFO/Treasurer of Mentor Public Schools located in Lake County; Dr. Lou Kramer, Superintendent of London City Schools; and Kristine Blind, CFO/Treasurer of London City Schools in Madison County.

Transparency and sound stewardship are the hallmarks of safeguarding our public dollars. OASBO members are the professionals who manage the business and finance side of Ohio's public school districts. They serve as the stewards of public funds and are held accountable for the use of these funds through:

- **Transparency statutes**, such as the Ohio Sunshine Law (which includes the *Ohio Public Records Law* R.C. 149.43 and the *Ohio Open Meetings Law* R.C. 121.22);
- **Transparency tools**, such as the *School District Profile Report* (i.e., the Cupp Report) linked [here](#) (which allows users to compare a district with similar school districts and the state as a whole), as well as data submitted through *Education Management Information System (EMIS)* (as prescribed by rules adopted pursuant to R.C. 3301.0714; 3314.17);
- **Audit and reporting measures**, such as the *state fiscal auditing requirements* in R.C. Chapter 117; and
- **Ethical decision-making**, such as *conflict of interest provisions* outlined in R.C. Chapter 102 and R.C. 2921.42, 2921.43.

OASBO appreciates the sponsors' commitment to bringing transparency and accountability measures to all schools receiving public funds. Considering the expansion of EdChoice vouchers

under HB 33, the need for transparency and accountability has never been more important to ensure Ohio taxpayer dollars are being spent for the public purpose of educating the students who accept vouchers and enroll in chartered nonpublic schools.

To assist families and policymakers in evaluating the education options for Ohio's children, an "apples-to-apples" comparison of the educational quality and financial accountability of the options available to families –both public and private – is needed.

The requirements in HB 407 are the first step in helping families to evaluate their choice options. From a financial reporting perspective, the bill requires each chartered nonpublic school enrolling students participating in a general scholarship program (defined to include the Ed Choice Scholarship Program or the Cleveland Scholarship Program) to submit a state expenditure report to the Department of Education and Workforce (ODEW) annually. This report must be posted to the Department's publicly accessible website, and it must include information regarding expenditures the school made using the state funds in that school year. Acknowledging it could prove challenging for some schools to report this information, the bill provides that a chartered nonpublic school may contract with an information technology center (ITC) for assistance in complying with the new requirement.

All parents want to make the best choice for their child, but that is not possible without information that offers a genuine comparison of the educational quality and financial accountability of the school options available to their family – both public and private. HB 407 takes steps to ensure parents are fully equipped with the knowledge and resources to objectively choose the best school for their family. This legislation also has the benefit of assisting policymakers and the public in understanding how their tax dollars are spent.

Chair Manning and members of the Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for your time and attention. We urge your support for HB 407. We are happy to address any questions.