

Ohio Alliance of Independent Schools

March 18, 2023

House Finance Committee – Primary and Secondary Education Subcommittee

House Bill 33 – Interested Party Testimony
Dan Dodd – Executive Director
Ohio Alliance of Independent Schools

- Andrews Osborne Academy
- Birchwood School of Hawken
- Canton Country Day School
- Central Montessori Academy
- Cincinnati Country Day School
- Cincinnati Hills
Christian Academy
- Columbus Academy
- Columbus Jewish Day School
- Columbus School for Girls
- Columbus Torah Academy
- Gilmour Academy
- Grand River Academy
- Hathaway Brown
- Hawken School
- Hershey Montessori School
- Hudson Montessori School
- Jos. and Florence Mandel Jewish Day School
- Lake Ridge Academy
- Laurel School
- The Lawrence School
- The Lillian and Betty Ratner School
- Linden Grove School
- The Lippman School
- Mansion Day School
- Marburn Academy
- Maumee Valley Country Day School
- McGuffey Montessori School
- The Miami Valley School
- The New School
- Old Trail School
- Olney Friends School
- Ridgewood School
- Ruffing Montessori School –
Cleveland Heights
- Ruffing Montessori – Rocky River
- The Schilling School for
Gifted Children
- The Seven Hills School
- Summit Country Day School
- University School
- Urban Community School
- Wellington School
- Welsh Hills School
- Western Reserve Academy

Chairwoman Richardson, Ranking Member Isaacsohn, and members of the Primary and Secondary Education Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present brief testimony regarding HB 33. Our organization is focused on improving the educational and regulatory environment for Ohio's independent schools. OAIS would urge the House to consider the following issues as part of the state's biennial budget:

Scholarship Granting Organization Tax Credit: In HB 110, the General Assembly established an income tax credit for donations made to scholarship granting organizations (SGO) to fund scholarships for primarily low-income students. Since the establishment of the credit, over 20 SGOs have been certified by the Ohio Attorney General's office. Thousands of donors have made donations to these SGOs in order to give additional financial aid to Ohio's neediest students.

The cap on the credit is \$750 for an individual filing, or \$1,500 for a joint filing. OAIS operates an SGO for some members, and we have received multiple requests from donors asking if there would ever be an increase in the cap. To give more students the opportunity to receive a high-quality education at their school of choice, we would recommend increasing the cap to \$2,500 for single filings or \$5,000 for joint filings. This would make Ohio's credit in line with what many other states offer, although several states offer larger limits and a corporate option we do not have.

Pupil Transportation Reform: Despite the promising changes made in the last biennial budget to produce greater safeguards for chartered nonpublic school students utilizing pupil transportation, families still have a great deal of difficulty securing reliable busing to their schools. School districts continue to find ways to cut off students from transportation options to nonpublic schools by offering payment-in-lieu-of-transportation that are woefully inadequate to pay for alternatives.

To continue to give families meaning options, we recommend the following:

- Adjusting the payment-in-lieu amount to 50% of the cost cited by the district for transporting the student, not to exceed \$2,500. This was in the Senate's version of the budget two years ago and would provide the opportunity to find a meaningful alternative to busing while still saving districts money.
- OAIS recommends a statutory limit for declarations of impracticality of two years, after which a district must go through the declaration process again. Population shifts due to massive economic development projects will lead to an influx of new residents, leading to a greater need for transportation to nonpublic schools and more students on buses, thereby decreasing the cost per pupil. Revisiting these decisions regularly may lead to different conclusions on practicality.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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