

## Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 11

Dear Chair Brenner, and Members of the Senate Education Committee,

Ohio's overall public education system is in the bottom half in the country, and many of our largest public schools like Columbus City Schools cost \$22K per student, have 65% chronic absenteeism, and 73% of the students are not proficient at state standards. For too many students Columbus public is little more than a billion-dollar daycare, if they bother to show up. The system is preparing them to be future dependents on the State rather than productive members of the advanced economy we want and need for Ohio.

Something **must** change!

As the chart below shows, educating a student with an EdChoice voucher of \$5,500 for grades K-8 and \$7,500 per student for 9-12<sup>th</sup> is a bargain with better performance compared to the cost of failing public schools:

	<b>Tax dollars spent per Student</b>	<b>Public School Proficiency Rate</b>	<b>Ed Choice Voucher Students Proficiency Rate</b>
<b>Columbus City Schools</b>	\$22,267	27%	55% Columbus City and 52% for Franklin County
<b>Cincinnati Public Schools</b>	\$19,888	34.6%	46%
<b>East Cleveland City School District</b>	\$31,952	13.8%	21%
<b>Akron City Schools</b>	\$20,476	30.2%	48%

Not every chartered non-public school outperforms, but it is impressive that most do despite receiving 1/3 or less per student and paying about half for teachers compared to public schools. The X-factor provided by some of these non-public charter schools is that they follow state academic standards while often teaching and belonging to a faith-based tradition. It is the sense of belonging to a community, history, tradition, and a value structure which imparts hope for the future that differentiates these schools. Public schools are very effective at taking middle class students who already come with a package of values, role models, and high expectations from a relatively stable family home and preparing them for college or technical school. Despite getting 20-30K per student, public schools in urban neighborhoods serving mostly economically disadvantaged students who lack hope, value structure, direction, or role models in their life have been totally ineffective. The department of education has tried to address this problem with the whole child framework and social emotional learning only to get push back for stepping into the domain of parent's rights. The state cannot get into the business of institutionalizing a whole child moral/ethical frame for public education without crossing the line into institutionalizing a state sponsored secular religion (usually leftist). Only the vouchers approach solves this problem by letting the parents take their children to the school which institutionalizes and reinforces the value system the parents deem best for their children.

Despite producing the best education value for taxpayer dollars, enrollment in non-public schools is only about 9% of the total enrollment and less than half of those students currently qualify for an EdChoice scholarship:

**2022 Enrollment numbers:**

Public Schools Student Count	1,498,628	82%
Community Schools	111,754	6%
Non-Public student enrollment	167,395 but only 76,900 currently getting an EdChoice Voucher	9%
Home schooling	47491	3%
	1,827,655	

The expansion of EdChoice vouchers under SB11 will likely cost the State as much as \$536.4 million dollars per year if the 90,500 students who currently attend non-public schools at their own expense suddenly becoming qualified for a voucher. Even though this number is the worst-case scenario, the State can afford this investment as it ended FY 2022 with a \$5.7 billion dollar surplus.

The real taxpayer cost savings here comes from the number of students who transfer from public schools. The Ohio Legislative Services Commission (“LSC”) estimates the taxpayer cost savings of a student who transfers from a public school to a non-public school at \$853 per student (\$8.8 million savings / 10,320 transfer students pursuant to their report). This assessment appears wildly inaccurate when students will be transferring from failing districts which cost \$20-\$30K to educate students to a non-public school with a voucher costing the state only \$6,000 on average to educate the student.

For example, East Cleveland City School district has 1,497 students, and spends \$31K per student to achieve a 13.8 proficiency rate. If the entire district was privatized and each student in this failing district was given an EdChoice voucher to go to any chartered non-public they wanted, it would result in taxpayer savings of \$37 million dollars and the students would get just as good if not better results based on the statistics above.

Therefore, I urge you to approve SB11 but consider expanding on its cost savings potential by adding provisions to encourage students to switch from consistently failing public schools to voucher supporting quality chartered-nonpublic schools.

Respectfully Submitted,

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**REFERENCES:**

All education data acquired from ODE Portal: <https://reports.education.ohio.gov/overview>  
Proficiency results were averaged for 3-8<sup>th</sup> to make comparisons with EdChoice data consistent.  
All data is from 2021-2022