



**AMERICANS FOR
PROSPERITY**
OHIO

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE – Proponent Testimony, S.B. 11, 2/21/2023

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the committee, thank you for holding this hearing and for the opportunity to provide testimony today.

My name is Donovan O'Neil and I am the State Director for Americans for Prosperity Ohio (AFP). As one of the largest grassroots organizations in the country, AFP is driving long-term solutions to some of the country's biggest problems. Our organization, and its thousands of activists across Ohio, are dedicated to breaking barriers that stand in the way of people realizing their full potential. Removing or reducing these barriers, in whatever forms they take, helps move our society toward one of mutual benefit, where people succeed by helping others improve their lives and by transforming their communities. Accordingly, I am here today to express support for S.B. 11 – The Parental Education Freedom Act.

Expanding educational choice to all students in Ohio will break down another barrier to future success for Ohio's children. Every child is different, and a one size fits all approach is continuing to fail our students. All children deserve a menu of options – programs, services, courses, and schools that are designed to address their interests and aptitudes. We should not be standardizing children – we should be allowing every kid to discover, develop, and apply their talents to realize their full potential.

Our education system was designed for a world that no longer exists – a standardized model of education that prepared students for a factory economy. To succeed in today's global economy, young people require different skills and mindsets that our current education model is not providing.

Expanding education options isn't just to the benefit of children – SB 11 gives power back to the people who know their children the best, their parents. Parents are the ultimate authority on all matters concerning their children and their children's needs, including education. All parents should have the right to decide where and how their children are educated.

However, Ohioans currently face challenges in navigating the current patchwork quilt of education options available today in the Buckeye state. This is why I believe that SB11, which seeks to create universal eligibility for the well-established EdChoice voucher program, is a crucial step in addressing these barriers for families seeking choice in their children's education. SB 11 would address the inequality of access to educational choice by providing \$5,500 per student in grades K-8, and \$7,500 per student in grades 9-12. Further, the homeschool tax credit will increase from \$250 to \$2,000.

With the passage of SB11, we can bring together this patchwork quilt of education options and ensure that all Ohio families have access to the educational experience they deserve. However, I also believe that we should seize this opportunity to go beyond just creating universal eligibility and incorporate additional reforms that will make Ohio a leader in education opportunity once again.

This includes universal open enrollment, which will give students the ability to attend the traditional public school of their choosing and maintain a vibrant public education environment in Ohio. Additionally, incorporating education savings accounts (ESAs) will allow parents to consider their children's long-term educational needs and desires, as voucher funds could be directed into an ESA to cover a student's unique educational needs year after year.

AFP believes that competition in the market leads to better ideas, options, and outcomes. The demand for more schooling options in the market exists, especially with the success of EdChoice, EdChoice Expansion, and the Cleveland Scholarship program. Ohio has an opportunity to fulfill that demand by expanding education options to all Ohio families. We support SB 11 and hope to see its passage out of this committee and this chamber. Thank you for your time and I'm happy to answer any questions from the committee.