



## SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE – Interested Party Testimony, House Bill 33, 5.4.23

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Ingram and members of the committee, thank you for holding this hearing and for the opportunity provide testimony. My name is Jeff Dillon, and I am the Ohio Legislative Director for Americans for Prosperity (AFP).

AFP, along with a series of partner organizations, is working to move our society more closely to one reflective of the Principles of Human Progress – the principles so eloquently captured in the Declaration of Independence – one of equal rights and mutual benefit, where everyone has the opportunity to live a life of meaning and succeed by benefiting others. My organization believes that society is multifaceted and can be better understood by examining its four Key Institutions: Community, Education, Business, and Government. Community, or civil society, should empower people to come together to solve problems and support one another. Education should empower people to discover, develop, and deploy their unique gifts and become lifelong learners. Business should empower people to create products and services that help others improve their lives. And Government should protect people's equal rights, including the rights to life, liberty, property, and the pursuit of happiness. I mention all this because I think it helps provide context for the proposed policies in HB 33 that I am here to discuss today per the committee agenda, the provisions related to school choice and expanded educational opportunities for Ohio students and families.

While the governor's expansion of EdChoice eligibility to 400% of the federal poverty level, and the House's recent further expansion to 450% are noteworthy steps in the right direction, they still fall far short of the equal rights principle of AFP's vision I just described. The law should apply equally to all people. It should not matter if a family or household is at 100%, 450%, 500%, 1,000% or even 10,000% of FPL. In Ohio, the ability to access an individualized education experience as unique as the student should not be means tested or depend on them living in a failing community. Education opportunity should be available to all students, in all communities. Everywhere.

If you were to leave the Statehouse today and travel only two and half hours south down U.S. Route 23 to Huntington, West Virginia, you would discover that one of Ohio's neighboring states has already taken several steps ahead by implementing a universal educational savings account (ESA) approach to education delivery through its [Hope Scholarship](#). In the past several

months, other states such as Arizona, Iowa, Utah, Arkansas, and Florida (with bipartisan support) have done the same. Universal school choice is an idea whose time has come, and it will help students, families and employers around this state better meet their unique needs in an ever evolving, rapidly changing world.

With respect to monies that are strictly state dollars, meaning no federal funds or other dedicated revenues, the House-passed version of HB 33 adds nearly \$6 billion in new spending from the end of fiscal year '22. With ample revenue available to pursue bold school choice reform, stopping at 450% of FPL for EdChoice eligibility would be a lackluster final result during this budget cycle. Pursuing a school choice policy with a universal element is a fair and reasonable approach because it affords opportunity to all and treats all Ohioans as equals under the law.

AFP Ohio has staff in Dayton, Perrysburg, Cuyahoga County, Steubenville, and at several points between engaging with activists and community members, and this is an issue that affects them directly and that is highly personal. People deeply care about their children's futures and their families' financial prospects, which is only proof that people are good and tend to have the right priorities. Please prioritize them, your constituents, during this Budget by reducing and eliminating barriers to opportunity and success so that Ohioans can have the best possible chance to thrive and live up to their full potential.

Thank you again, Chairman, for the opportunity to convey this message to the committee, and I would be happy to do my best to answer any questions the committee might have.

*Americans for Prosperity (AFP) exists to recruit, educate, and mobilize citizens in support of the policies and goals of a free society at the local, state, and federal level, helping every American live their dream – especially the least fortunate. AFP has more than 3.2 million activists across the nation, a local infrastructure that includes 36 state chapters, and has received financial support from more than 100,000 Americans in all 50 states. For more information, visit [www.AmericansForProsperity.org](http://www.AmericansForProsperity.org).*