



**HB 96 Interested Party Testimony
Eldrich Carr, Head of School
Marburn Academy
House Education Committee
Chair Sarah Fowler Arthur
March 4, 2025**

Chair Fowler Arthur, Vice Chair Odioso, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the House Education Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today on HB 96, and to highlight the importance of the Jon Peterson Special Needs Scholarship (JPSNS) and respectfully request an increase to this vital scholarship. My name is Eldrich Carr, and I am the Head of School of Marburn Academy. However, today I am here representing three schools: Lawrence School serving students and families in Northeast Ohio; Springer School and Center in the greater Cincinnati area; and Marburn Academy in the greater Columbus area. Our schools serve a large cross-section of Ohio with our families hailing from 24 counties.

Each of our schools operate as a nonprofit, tuition-based private independent day school for students with specific learning disabilities such as dyslexia, ADHD and other related learning complications that create executive function challenges. In addition to these specific learning disabilities, some of our students may also have a diagnosis of high-functioning autism. It is important to know that prior to enrolling in our schools, these students and their committed families have tried a variety of schools and programs, unfortunately with little success. What makes schools like ours different from other private independent schools is that families come to us not by choice, but by necessity.

The Jon Peterson Special Needs Scholarship is a vital educational scholarship program for families with K–12 students that have special needs. Structured into six categorical levels, each category aligns with varying types of special needs and corresponds to different scholarship values. These categories range from Category 1 which includes speech and language disabilities and is currently valued at \$9,585 up to Category 6 which includes autism spectrum disorders, traumatic brain injuries, and visual and hearing impairments with a scholarship value of \$32,445. Generally speaking, Lawrence School, Springer School and Center, and Marburn Academy primarily serve students in Category 2 which include specific learning disabilities such as dyslexia; this scholarship category is presently valued at \$12,470.

Due to costs and increasing expenses associated with providing special needs services, in FY26-27 we are seeking a Jon Peterson Special Needs Scholarship increase in this biennium of 10%. It cannot be overstated how impactful the Jon Peterson Special Needs Scholarship is for families of children with special needs in Ohio. These scholarships give students and families the opportunities to access the necessary specialized resources and learning environments they need to truly reach their potential.

Chair Fowler Arthur and members of the House Education Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify on behalf of our students, families, and institutions. We appreciate the support the legislature has provided for the Jon Peterson Special Needs Scholarship in the past, and are grateful for your consideration of our proposal to increase the scholarship which is providing invaluable support for children with special needs in ways that can truly change their future. I would be happy to answer any questions you have at this time.