



HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE – INTERESTED PARTY TESTIMONY, H.B. 96 – 03.04.2025

Chairwoman Fowler-Arthur, Vice-Chair Odioso, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the House Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify as an interested party on House Bill 96. My name is Donovan O'Neil, and I serve as the State Director with Americans for Prosperity Ohio. At AFP-Ohio we put a megaphone to the voices of Ohioans who want to move our state from middle in the Midwest to number one in the nation for education opportunity. A significant barrier to achieving that status are policies that limit flexibility for families or inhibit the ability for a teacher to teach.

### **Education Opportunity**

We believe every family should have the ability to choose the best educational environment for their children. School choice empowers parents to select an education that aligns with their values and meets their child's unique needs. By supporting education opportunity, we are supporting policies that move resources to the front lines of education – the classroom and teacher. Educational opportunity ensures that every child, regardless of background or financial situation, has access to an education that unlocks that child's unique potential. Expanding these opportunities helps close achievement gaps and provides all students with the tools they need to succeed in life.

### **Fund Families**

Our first principle is to fund families. By providing financial resources directly to families, we enable them to make the best educational choices for their children. This approach ensures that parents have the means to access a variety of educational options, including private and non-chartered nonpublic schools. Programs like the expansion of EdChoice and universal ESAs, like the Backpack Bill from the 135<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, are crucial steps in this direction.

### **Maximize Flexibility**

The second principle is to maximize flexibility. Education is not one-size-fits-all, and families need the flexibility to tailor their children's education to their specific needs. Scholarship Granting Organizations (SGOs) provide this flexibility by allowing taxpayers to direct their contributions and giving students more opportunities to afford the education best suited for them. Additionally, broader open enrollment policies, including intra-district open enrollment, would create more school choice within government-administered schools.

## **Expand Supply of Education Options**

The third principle is to expand the supply of education options. By supporting the growth of alternative educational institutions, we increase the diversity and quality of educational offerings. This competition drives innovation and ensures that all families have access to schools that best meet their children's needs. We support a variety of educational options, including government-run schools, charter schools, private schools, non-chartered non-public schools, home schools, and online schools.

In conclusion, the state budget should reflect our commitment to school choice, educational opportunity, and the principles of funding families, maximizing flexibility, and expanding the supply of education options. I urge the committee to support these priorities for the benefit of our children and our state's future.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.