

Chair Stewart, Vice Chair Dovilla, Ranking Member Sweeney, and Honorable Members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony for HB96.

Good afternoon, My Name is Robyn Houze. We reside in the Olentangy School District and our children attend a non-chartered private school.

There is enough money allocated for education in Ohio, but it is time that the money follow the student. The easy answer for parents is to send their child to public school. It's often the closest school to one's home and transportation if required is provided. If a student is attending a private school, there is an intentional reason the parents have decided to make the switch to a school often farther away and in most cases, they are required to transport their student each way each day. Beside time and logistics to be managed, there is likely a financial cost. Even if they are getting a scholarship or voucher it may not cover the full amount, and they are likely paying for items like uniforms and enrollment fees. It takes effort and sacrifice for families to make the switch out of a public school and is not a decision taken lightly by parents. Therefore, the public school must not be meeting the needs of the student for the parents to seek alternative educational options. Clearly based on the expansion of the EdChoice voucher and its utilization Ohio parents desire greater educational opportunities for their students.

If a student doesn't attend a public school, then the state funds to educate the student should be made available in an educational savings account to be spent at an Ohio chartered or non-chartered private school.

On average per pupil Ohio would save money with a new ESA model because the average public school is requiring over \$18,000 in funds to educate a student and the EdChoice voucher is less than half of that (see table cited at end of written testimony). If the public schools are not meeting the needs of Jon Peterson scholarship awardees, then that money should be available to follow the student too in addition to money for tuition when they switch to a private school.

Ohio is failing to hold public schools accountable to educate students and needs to either fix the 5-star rating program, allow the funding to follow the student or both. HB 96 won't fix the 5-star report card, but it can provide for allowing educational dollars to follow the student in the form of an educational savings account permitting them to attend private chartered or non-chartered schools. In addition, we need to stop the income discrimination of the means testing and create true universal school choice. Expanding school choice if done in a fiscally responsible way can decrease the budget for education and in many cases public schools will benefit too by receiving the local property tax dollars but not the student to educate.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony on supporting education opportunity for Ohio families in House Bill 96. I would be happy to answer any questions at this time.

Source of data is Table 1 below found in the following Fordham Institute article:

<https://fordhaminstitute.org/ohio/commentary/irrational-hysteria-over-billion-dollar-price-tag-ohios-private-school-scholarships>

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**Table 1: Public school funding versus scholarship amounts**

	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024
Total public school revenues	\$27.1 billion	\$28.4 billion	\$30.0 billion
Number of public school students	1,659,065	1,658,682	1,651,396
Public school revenue per pupil	\$16,333	\$17,117	\$18,183
Average scholarship amount (all programs)	\$7,384	\$7,625	\$6,521

**Source:** Public school enrollments and revenues are pulled from DEW's [downloadable files](#) ("Expanded List" and "Expenditure Rankings"), while average scholarship amounts are from [Advanced Reports](#). **Note:** Total revenues for public schools includes state, local, federal and non-tax sources of funding; data from all public schools are included (traditional district, joint-vocational, and charter/STEM schools). The decline in the average scholarship amount in FY24 is due to the expanded EdChoice eligibility for high-income families who receive reduced scholarships.