



# OHIO CHRISTIAN EDUCATION NETWORK

*A Network of Center for Christian Virtue*

## HB96 Interested Party Testimony

House Finance Committee

Troy McIntosh, Executive Director

March 12, 2025

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Good afternoon Chair Stewart, Vice Chair Dovilla, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Finance Committee. My name is Troy McIntosh and I serve as Executive Director of the Ohio Christian Education Network representing 198 Evangelical and Catholic schools and 55,000 students across the state.

Briefly, our membership believes that there are several ways to take what the General Assembly has begun in the area of school choice, and in conjunction with the budget proposed by the governor, improve it with a few modifications. We believe these amendments to be submitted will improve the educational landscape for all students and continue to expand the opportunities families have been granted and increase accountability on providers.

The first three recommendations would provide the type of incremental expansion of school choice opportunities that the General Assembly has shown they are prefer to take.

First, we recommend that the current homeschool tax credit of \$250 per family be adjusted to provide \$250 credit per qualifying student. Even at this rate, the cost to the state of a homeschool student is a fraction, perhaps under 10%, of what it would cost if these students were enrolled in their local public school. Incentivizing families to consider homeschooling is a financial and educational win for the state, particularly because homeschool students consistently outperform those attending a local school. A recent academic analysis of the CLT exam showed that homeschooled students outperform student in every other educational model. Prof. Lisa Treleaven wrote, "This is consistent with prior research findings of superior academic performance of homeschool students as compared to other school types."

Second, we encourage the House to take up the provisions of SB68, sponsored by Sen. Romanchuk. This bill would provide an educational savings account program for students attending a non-chartered non-public school. The ESA would be valued at 90% of an EdChoice scholarship. Research has shown that school choice programs are most effective when there are more schooling options available to students. Ohio is unique with its chartered/non-chartered structure. We believe that both should be open to students seeking the best school for their learning.

Third, we suggest that expanding the SGO tax credit from \$750 for individuals and \$1500 for couples be increased to \$1500 and \$3000. Many states with ESA programs have higher credit limits than Ohio and many offer corporate credits. This increase would bring Ohio



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more in line with other states and help middle income families in particular with the tuition differential many face when enrolling at an EdChoice provider school.

The final two suggestions are rather simple and cost-free. First, one of the barriers to a growing school choice program is the physical plant limitations for charter and private schools. To help private schools with physical plan expansion, we request that chartered non-public schools be given the same priority status as high-performing community schools, STEM schools, and boarding schools for purchasing or leasing unused public school facilities. These facilities are community assets that were funded with the intention of it providing for the education of the community's children and chartered non-publics make such provision. We have had at least one chartered non-public school in our membership be turned down from purchasing such unused facilities.

Finally, we ask that the GA add a prohibition to CBD stores from operating within 500 feet of a school building, placing it in the same category as liquor stores and dispensaries. The FDA has issued a warning against people driving after consuming CBD products and the risk of having these stores in the immediate vicinity of schools is obvious. We have at least one member school with a CBD store operating directly across the street from its school building.

Thank you for your efforts on the new biennial budget and the GA's commitment to giving Ohio's students the best opportunities for their education.