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*Ways and Means*

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32nd District

**Sponsor Testimony – Senate Bill 44**  
**Senate Education Committee**  
**Senator Sandra O'Brien**  
**January 29, 2025**

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to deliver sponsor testimony today on Senate Bill 44, which would allow students to receive an EdChoice or Cleveland scholarship and either an autism or Jon Peterson Special Needs (JPSN) scholarship at the same time. This is essentially a reintroduction of Senate Bill 311 from the 135<sup>th</sup> General Assembly.

Under current law, students who qualify for either an autism or JPSN scholarship may only receive that singular scholarship at a time. The scholarships themselves provide good funding to cover most, if not all, of the costs for services provided to the student. However, even though the money may be used for tuition as well, most autism and JPSN scholarships will not cover both service and tuition payments for a student attending a non-government school.

Because of this, many students who would otherwise attend a non-government school are not able to afford tuition at that school. Students with these scholarships have effectively been put at a disadvantage because of their need for the autism or JPSN scholarship.

This is an issue of fairness, and there is a simple fix. Senate Bill 44 would allow those students to also receive an EdChoice or Cleveland scholarship on top of their autism or JPSN scholarship. The only change made to this bill from the previous GA is that a student's JPSN scholarship would be restricted to only pay for services if a student also receives an EdChoice scholarship. This bill would, in effect, allow students to attend the school they want without having to worry about the additional costs for tuition and services.

Thank you again, Chair Brenner, for giving me the opportunity to speak on Senate Bill 44. I'm happy to take any questions from the committee.