



State Senator Mark Romanchuk
Senate Bill 68 Sponsor Testimony
Ohio Senate Finance Committee
February 18, 2025

Chairman Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and committee members, I am pleased to provide sponsor testimony for Senate Bill 68. This bill is a reintroduction of Senate Bill 304 from the 135th General Assembly and companion bill House Bill 339, which was introduced by Representative Click in the Ohio House.

This bill establishes the Nonchartered Educational Savings Account Program. Nonchartered, nonpublic schools are private, tuition-based schools that choose not to be chartered by the State of Ohio and do not receive any state funding. With the passage of the state operating budget, House Bill 33, and the expansion of the ED Choice program, nonchartered, nonpublic schools were left out of the expansion. Senate Bill 68 corrects this issue by authorizing the Educational Savings Account Program to provide eligible students enrolled in nonchartered, nonpublic schools with an Educational Savings Account (ESA) to fund elementary, middle, and high school education expenses.

This account lets families pay their ESA monies directly to their nonchartered, nonpublic school of choice for educational goods and services or request funds to be reimbursed to the student's parents for other eligible and documented expenses. Nonchartered, nonpublic schools will still comply with Ohio's school operating standards. The Nonchartered Educational Savings Account Program will require the Treasurer of State to administer the program with the assistance of the Department of Education and Workforce which will oversee the proper allocation and guidelines for the use of the funds. This oversight will include audits and reporting to ensure that the funds are used for their intended purpose. For example, parents must affirm that students will take a nationally recognized standardized achievement test.

Without Senate Bill 68, parents are incentivized to remove their children from trusted and preferred schools of choice. This incentive financially forces parents to enroll them in other less appealing schools to the exclusion of their children's best education needs.

In my district, Temple Christian School, a nonchartered, nonpublic school feels the effect of this expansion and has suffered firsthand from a significant drop in student enrollment. Not assisting schools like Temple Christian School could cause this school and other nonchartered, nonpublic

schools throughout Ohio to close because parents are being motivated to remove their children because they cannot get assistance from the Ed Choice program.

Passing Senate Bill 68 will make House Bill 33 a true, universal ed-choice voucher program and will allow every parent to have access to much-needed funding. I have had the pleasure of hearing numerous testimonies from graduates and parents of students who say that nonchartered schools allow them to get a quality education while, at the same time, instilling traditional values grounded in their beliefs.

The Nonchartered Educational Savings Account will ensure all families have the option of real school choice. Additionally, Senate Bill 68 will significantly ease the burden on families by providing assistance to pay for school tuition. This is only fair since they are still required to pay taxes for public schools.

Passage of Senate Bill 68 will ensure that all students receive their best education in their preferred school of choice and have the opportunity to excel.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I will answer any questions at this time.