

Senate Bill 68 Proponent Testimony
Senate Finance Committee

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Chairman Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and committee members, I am pleased to provide proponent testimony for Senate Bill 68.

I am the administrator of Licking County Christian Academy, a nonchartered school, in Heath located about 30 miles east of here. For over 50 years, LCCA has provided an excellent education for young people. Our graduates serve as pastors, civil servants, educators, doctors, and business leaders. LCCA is a ministry of the Newark Baptist Temple. As such, we are committed to maintaining our status as a nonchartered school. We believe that as a ministry of a church, we should not seek permission from the State in the form of a charter to operate an education ministry. We object to state control of our curriculum and state-licensing mandates for our teachers. While we have certain education-related objections, we respect the State's role in providing for the safety and general welfare of the people. We comply with the State's minimum education standards and health, fire, and safety laws.

The Need for Senate Bill 68

I am testifying today in support of the Nonchartered ESA Program because current school choice legislation excludes nonchartered schools. Last year every family that contacted our school for enrollment asked if we accepted EdChoice scholarships. Unfortunately, because nonchartered schools are excluded, we had to say no. For most families, that ended the conversation. While many of our current families reenrolled, several left to use EdChoice scholarships at chartered schools.

I fully support the educational freedom made possible by EdChoice believing that competition between schools enhances the quality of education in a community. However, by excluding nonchartered schools from scholarship opportunities, we unintentionally reduce parent's school choice options and increase taxpayer costs. Senate Bill 68 corrects this imbalance by funding parental choice for nonchartered schools while ensuring fiscal accountability, ultimately reducing taxpayer burdens while positively impacting public school funding.

Educational Accountability

At the heart of this bill is an important principle: parents, not the government, are the primary decision-makers in their children's education. Education belongs to parents who are best equipped to decide where their children will thrive academically and otherwise. Nonchartered schools are inherently accountable to parents. Unlike public schools, where funding is guaranteed regardless of performance, private schools must earn the trust and satisfaction of the families they serve. This is the highest form of accountability. In addition to parental accountability, the bill includes provisions that would prevent fraudulent use of the program and financial transparency.

Financial Impact of SB 68

Under SB 68, the cost to taxpayers to educate a child at a nonchartered school would be slightly more than \$7,418, which is significantly lower than the \$14,500¹ per-pupil operational expenditure in public schools and less than the cost to educate a student with an EdChoice scholarship which is between \$7,519 and \$9,761² *excluding* transportation costs (\$1,168³ to \$2,500⁴ per rider).

If a student leaves a nonchartered school and instead utilizes an EdChoice scholarship at a chartered school, it could cost taxpayers up to \$1,269 more per K-6 student and \$3,511 more per 7-12 student⁵ than if the student had remained in a nonchartered school with an ESA scholarship.

Unfair competition is resulting in declined enrollment at nonchartered schools and the financially motivated decision of some nonchartered schools to accept a charter both resulting in higher education costs for taxpayers. The only way to mitigate these cost increases is to pass SB 68.

Conclusion

Senate Bill 68 reflects a commitment to fairness, choice, and quality in education. It helps parents to make better decisions, ensures that taxpayer funds are used effectively, and promotes healthy competition that benefits all schools.

I urge this committee to advance Senate Bill 68 and ensure that all families, regardless of their choice of school, have access to the resources they need to provide their children with an excellent education. Thank you for your time, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

¹ Fordham Institute estimate for FY2022: https://www.ohiobythenumbers.com/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

² Includes scholarship amount (varies), auxiliary service funding (\$912.97), and administrative cost reimbursement (\$440): These figures are the latest from the Ohio Office of Budget and School Funding presented at the Nonpublic Superintendent's Advisory Committee meeting on February 18, 2025.

³ <https://www.lsc.ohio.gov/assets/organizations/legislative-service-commission/files/pupil-transportation-formula.pdf>.

⁴ <https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Finance-and-Funding/School-Transportation/School-Transportation-Finance/Payment-in-Lieu-of-Transportation/Transportation-Services-for-Chartered-Nonpublic-and-Community-School-Students-Handbook.pdf.aspx?lang=en-US>).

⁵ EdChoice scholarship K-6 (\$6,166) + Auxiliary service (\$912.97) + Administrative Cost reimbursement (\$440) + Average cost per rider (\$1,168) – NESA scholarship (\$7,418) = **\$1,268.97**; EdChoice scholarship 7-12 (\$8,408) + Auxiliary service (\$912.97) + Administrative Cost reimbursement (\$440) + Average cost per rider (\$1,168) – NESA scholarship (\$7,418) = **\$3,510.97**