



**House Bill 96**  
**Testimony – Interested Party**  
**Senate Finance Committee**  
**June 6, 2025**

Chairman Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on House Bill 96. As the Committee concludes its hearings, and possibly revisits some items for reconsideration, I'd like to briefly highlight the benefits of extending Disadvantaged Impact Aid (DPIA) to chartered nonpublic schools.

I am Tom Rhatican, associate director with the Catholic Conference of Ohio, the official voice of the Catholic Church in Ohio on public policy. We have 367 Catholic schools with approximately 113,000 students—or approximately 63% of all chartered, nonpublic school students in Ohio.

As always, we'd like to thank Governor DeWine and Senate and House leadership for their thoughtful concern and ongoing support for the thousands of parents who have the option to send their children to Catholic schools (and all nonpublic schools).

Last week, I'd offered testimony explaining how our Catholic school enrollment has steadily increased over the past few years – with 60% of our schools now with a waiting list. We now enroll the same percentage of African American children as the public schools, and an even greater percentage of Hispanic students.

Likewise, I'd noted that the number of our students with special needs has doubled in the past ten years. And so we are very grateful for the 4.8 per cent increase in the Jon Peterson Special Needs Scholarship included in the current Senate Substitute Amendment.

Lastly, and as we continue to expand our outreach to more and more families from economically disadvantaged areas, we've identified the need for greater intervention services in the areas of reading (and math) and other closely related services, as well as challenges with safety and security.

Disadvantaged Pupil Impact Aid is designed specifically to help alleviate these types of challenges. Therefore, we respectfully request that the Committee reconsider extending DPIA to chartered nonpublic school students (SC\_0836).

If a public school is allocated \$700 in DPIA for every qualified student, we propose that a chartered nonpublic school student – living in that same public district, and whose family also qualifies for DPIA (at approximately 185% FPL or below) be awarded the same \$700.

Here, and similar to the EdChoice program, the student could only apply the award at a chartered nonpublic school. The school would likewise have to comply with all the same accountability and reporting requirements as public schools that take DPIA.

Many of our inner-city schools report costs to educate exceeding \$9,000 for K-12 and \$14,000 for high schools, far exceeding the voucher amounts (\$6166 and \$8404, respectively). And

parents who qualify as “low-income” do not pay any additional tuition above the voucher, thus leaving many of the schools with a growing revenue shortfall as they attempt to enroll more low income students. DPIA would certainly help offset some of those costs and provide the students with the additional services they need.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions.