



THE YOUNGSTOWN CHRISTIAN SCHOOL



4401 Southern Blvd. Youngstown, Ohio 44512

Phone: 330-788-8088

Elementary Fax: 330-788-7440

High School Fax: 330-788-2875

Interested Party Testimony

House Bill 64: Biennium Budget, FY2016-2017

Presented by Youngstown Christian School: Michael Pecchia, President

Thursday, March 26, 2015

Chairman Smith and members of the Finance Committee

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak to you this morning. My name is Michael Pecchia, and I am the President of Youngstown Christian School in Youngstown, Ohio. We are a chartered non-public K-12 school located in Youngstown. We currently serve 615 students from throughout the greater Mahoning Valley of which 74% are receiving one of our state-sponsored scholarships. On behalf of those 473 students and their families, I want to thank you for your courage, compassion, commitment and conviction for making Ohio the national leader in school choice options. I applaud your willingness to give hope and a future to, in many cases, the “least of these” or “disadvantaged” in our state.

As you may know, our city is among the poorest in the country with a poverty rate of over 40% and, even worse, nearly 65% of our children live in poverty, making it the 2nd worst-rated city in the nation. Not surprising, the Youngstown City School District, in which we are located, is the state’s poorest school district according to the Governor’s biennial budget proposal. Programs like EdChoice and the EdChoice Expansion or the Income-Based Scholarship are giving hope to our families for a better life for their children, a life they know comes only with a good education. The Jon Peterson Special Needs Scholarship Program and the Ohio Autism Scholarship Program have given hope to families with special needs kids who know that “one size educational programs do not fit all.” Schools such as Youngstown Christian School are your hands extended as we embrace your vision and provide a high quality educational experience to our families.

Not only do schools like Youngstown Christian fill a much needed void in our educational system, but we also do it at a fraction of the cost of some of our public schools. Because of the economic conditions of our area, our tuition rates have historically been lower than the scholarship amounts and today are less than 10% higher than the current EdChoice Scholarships. With more than 60% of our students deemed “low income” we often waive the additional tuition. We do “more with less” primarily on the backs of our highly qualified teaching staff who make 15% to 45% less in salary than their public school counterparts and have lower quality health care and no retirement.

Preparing the next generation for a life of Christian Service



Youngstown
Christian School

THE YOUNGSTOWN CHRISTIAN SCHOOL



Youngstown
Christian School

4401 Southern Blvd. Youngstown, Ohio 44512

Phone: 330-788-8088

Elementary Fax: 330-788-7440

High School Fax: 330-788-2875

We are grateful that House Bill 64 is proposing a long overdue increase (to \$5,700) in the 9-12 scholarship amount. The K-8 scholarship however remains unchanged (since 2005) at \$4,250, and we would support raising that amount as well. I'm sure you know that the cost of rent, utilities, groceries and gas have not remained at the same levels as 10 years ago. So I ask you why the cost of education should remain the same? It has been proposed, and I ask you to support, an increase in maximum scholarship amounts for the EdChoice Scholarship to equal the state foundation funding, for both the high school and K-8 scholarships. This would increase the scholarship to a max value of \$5,900 in the 2015-16 school year, and \$6,000 for the 2016-17 school year. Students participating in open enrollment, or attending charter schools receive this funding amount, so why shouldn't scholarship recipients? We are providing the same, if not (in our case) a better education than our public school counterparts.

Although mission mindedness and personal sacrifice are at the heart of what we all do at YCS, our ability to attract and retain highly qualified teachers is a major concern for the future. It is difficult for a school like ours to raise substantial funds to cover the gap between tuition and the true cost of education, which must include a compensation package for teachers to live and be able to raise a family. Our development efforts must focus on capital projects and equipment needs to ensure our students have adequate facilities and technology as we do not have local levies to depend on. Our students, 60% who live in poverty and nearly the same concentration come to us academically "at risk," deserve the highest quality teaching environment we can give them.

In conclusion, I would like to once again thank you Chairman Smith and members of the Finance Committee for allowing me to provide testimony today on House Bill 64, the biennium budget for FY2016-2017. I appreciate and support the current funding increases you are proposing for the current school choice programs and urge you to consider the additional levels of funding I have proposed.

I would be happy to answer any questions you or the members may have.

Preparing the next generation for a life of Christian Service