



SAINT MARTIN
DE PORRES *High School*
A Cristo Rey Network School

Transforming urban Cleveland one student at a time

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Cera and members of the Ohio House Finance Committee:

My name is Breanay Clemons, a junior at Saint Martin de Porres. I live in Cleveland and participate in the Cleveland Scholarship Program. As part of Saint Martin's Corporate Work Study Program, I work one day per week at Progressive Insurance.

My name is Kiara Morris, a junior at Saint Martin de Porres. I live in Warrensville Heights and participate in the EdChoice Scholarship Program. As part of Saint Martin's Corporate Work Study Program I work one day per week at The Cleveland Foundation.

Thank you for letting us provide our position on House Bill 49.

We'd like to begin by telling you about our school, Saint Martin de Porres, Cleveland's Cristo Rey High School. Rich Clark, the founding president created Saint Martin in 2003 to provide a high-quality, college-preparatory high school for the students and families of limited economic means in Cleveland and its surrounding suburbs.

Since founding, all nine (9) graduating classes have achieved 100% college acceptance, and 92% of last year's class directly enrolled in college. Approximately 80% of Saint Martin students are the first in their family to attend college. Average household family incomes range between \$19,000 -\$26,000 for a family of four. The cost of education at Saint Martin is \$15,500 per student per year, and through our innovative Corporate Work Study Program the students earn 40% of this cost.

This means we each work one day per week throughout the school year to help our families pay for our education. This also means our school days and school year are longer to accommodate this work schedule. In addition to helping pay for our education, we are also gaining real-world work experience and connections. When we graduate from Saint Martin, we will have 1,600 hours of professional work experience to showcase on our resumes.

As well as rigorous academics and an innovative Corporate Work Study Program, a large focus of our school is forming leaders who will work hard and advocate for social justice. We are inspired to recognize opportunities to support our communities through action, government involvement and advocacy and that is why we are especially grateful for the chance to present to you today.

In fact, our fellow student Stanford Vales, a senior, is also in Columbus as a part of Youth Advocacy Day testifying and speaking with lawmakers about youth programs, specifically focused on health, recreation and education and supporting neighborhood development. His Corporate Work Study Job is at the Saint Clair Superior Community Development Corp, and he is engaged in a program called Future Leaders of the World (FLOW), through the Neighborhood Leadership Institute. So you can see, a Saint Martin education not only prepares students to become successful in college and life, but to be informed citizens and engaged leaders.

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Currently, Ohio is home to the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Program, which provides scholarships to students who live in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District to be used toward tuition at the participating private school of their choice. Today, Cleveland scholarships are worth \$4,250 for students in grades K-8 and \$5,700 for students in high school.

Ohio's EdChoice Scholarship Program, the state's largest scholarship program, is available to students who are assigned to the state's underperforming public schools. Students in that program also receive scholarships to be used toward tuition at the participating private school of their choice. But, their scholarship amounts are higher. They receive \$4,650 for grades K-8 and \$6,000 for high school. Students who live in the boundaries of the Cleveland School District are not eligible to apply for the EdChoice Scholarship.

We ask for your support for language to be included in House Bill 49 that would increase Cleveland Scholarship amounts to be equal to those of the EdChoice Scholarship at \$4,650 for K-8 and \$6,000 for high school. By aligning the scholarship amounts you will help create equity for the Cleveland Scholarship students.

While an increase of \$300 at the high school level may not seem like a lot of money, for many in our neighborhood it is; further, it is enormous in the message it sends to those living in Cleveland.

Our fellow students at Saint Martin come from 29 different zip codes throughout Northeast Ohio with most of us coming from the City of Cleveland. The largest percentage of students comes from the immediate area of our school, zip code 44103. According to the most recent census data for our zip code:

- 63% of households have income and benefits of less than \$24,000/year;
- Almost one quarter of residents ages 25-64 have less than a high school degree while only 34% have a high school diploma or equivalent and
- Less than 10% of our neighboring residents hold a Bachelor's degree or higher.

Compare that with results of Saint Martin, where 25% of our alumni earn a college degree which is 67% higher than our socioeconomic peers. Further, living our mission of *Transforming Urban Cleveland One Student at a Time*, of our first three (3) graduating classes, 60 have earned college degrees and roughly 82% of them are working in a professional environment in and around the City of Cleveland. In short, we don't leave our hometown.

So how big of a difference does \$300 make?

As we mentioned, a Saint Martin education costs \$15,500 per year but no one is, or ever has been, turned away because they cannot pay. In addition to our earnings through the Corporate Work Study Program, and the Cleveland Scholarship or EdChoice scholarship, each family is asked to contribute to their child's education with the average family paying

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\$300 - \$800 per year. Further, Saint Martin works with families to create a payment plan that meets each family's needs. So you can see how \$300 dollars per year, really does make a big difference for many.

But again, it's not just about the money, it is about the message. By not having parity among the two scholarship plans, families and children of Cleveland are not as supported as our peers and friends, some of whom only live a block away. Because of city boundaries two students who live on the same street can receive different amounts.

Therefore an unintended outcome might be families moving out of the City of Cleveland to increase their support. As future leaders who will one day face similarly complex issues, we encourage you to align the scholarship amounts to be equitable.

Thank you for your time and strong consideration of this request.

Respectfully,

Breanay Clemons and Kiara Morris
Class of 2018 and representing the entire community of Saint Martin de Porres