



HB 1 Interested Party Testimony
Eldrich Carr, Marburn Academy
Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education
Chair Tracy Richardson
February 25, 2021

Chair Richardson, Ranking Member Troy and members of the Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education, thank you for allowing me to testify today as an interested party on HB 1, sponsored by Representative Jamie Callender and Representative Bride Sweeney, to reform school funding in Ohio. My name is Eldrich Carr, and I am the Head of School of Marburn Academy in Columbus, Ohio. However, due to the pandemic, today I am here representing three schools: Springer School and Center serving students and families in the greater Cincinnati area; Lawrence School serving students and families in Northeast Ohio; and Marburn Academy serving students and families right here in the greater Columbus area. Each of our schools operate as a nonprofit, tuition-based private independent day school for students with learning disabilities such as dyslexia, ADHD, and executive function issues. Additionally, some of our students may have high-functioning autism. Prior to enrolling in our schools, these families and students have tried a variety of schools and programs with little success. What makes our schools different from other Independent Private Schools is that families come to us out of **necessity** and not by **choice**. I am here to testify today on the importance of the Jon Peterson Special Needs Scholarship (JPSNS) and the Autism Scholarship to our students and families and urge your support to ensure these programs are properly funded.

As the General Assembly considers HB 1 and changes to the school funding formula, we wish to highlight how these changes may impact the JPSNS and Autism Scholarship which are vital for families of children with special needs in Ohio. Collectively our schools serve families from 29 counties, 158 cities and townships, and 142 school districts. This represents a large cross section of the state of Ohio. These scholarships give students the opportunities to access the specialized resources and learning environment they need to achieve more than they could ever imagine.

In the As Introduced version of HB 1, the JPSNS and Autism scholarship values remain status quo which we are deeply grateful for. Under this new model it's our understanding the scholarships would be directly funded by an appropriation line item in the budget. We endorse this transition as it will simplify administration and remove stress on public schools' budgets. However, what is unclear is the appropriation amount for the scholarship programs as these line items do not currently exist in the legislation. We ask that as discussions on HB 1 continue, the General Assembly maintains JPSNS and Autism Scholarship accessibility and value at the same level as they are today.

Chair Richardson and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for allowing me to testify on behalf of our students, families and institutions. As we look to the future, it is our hope that the JPSNS and Autism Scholarships are properly funded and secured so that families of children with special needs will have access to the services they need and deserve. I would be happy to answer any questions you have at this time.