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**Ohio Education Association
House Bill 200: Opposition Testimony
House Education and Career Readiness Committee
June 6, 2017**

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair Slaby, Ranking Member Fedor and Members of the Committee,

My name is Scott DiMauro, I am a teacher from Worthington who currently serves as the Vice President of the Ohio Education Association. On behalf of the 124,000 members of the OEA thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in opposition to House Bill 200.

HB 200 calls for a greatly expanded voucher program based on family income. The bill would double the threshold for eligibility of the current program to 400% of poverty, expand eligibility to all grades, and remove the cap on number of vouchers. The bill would increase voucher amounts and allow the money to be used for fees as well tuition. Any unused portion of the voucher would be deposited into an education savings account for the student.

OEA is opposed to the creation or expansion of voucher programs as they drain needed resources from the approximately 90% of students who attend Ohio's local public schools. HB 200 raises a number of concerns:

Increased costs- Passage of HB 200 would increase the number of students eligible for vouchers by expanding the income-based program to all grades and raising the income cap to \$98,400 for a family of four. According to the LSC Fiscal Note for this bill, roughly 74% of Ohio's children (1.04 million students) would be eligible. This would be true for students in every district—regardless of the quality of the public schools.

HB 200 would increase the costs of the state's voucher program by increasing voucher amounts to \$5,000 for grades K-8 and \$7,500 for grades 9-12. Additional costs would depend on the take-up rate for newly eligible students. Even at a very low take-up rate of 2.5%, the Fiscal Note estimates a net increase in the state's costs of \$45.1 million. This estimate does not take into account the additional costs incurred by districts for the transportation of additional students to private schools.

Misplaced priorities- The increased costs that the state would incur to pay tuition for additional students to attend private schools would come in the context of a very tight state budget. As you know, hundreds of school districts stand to lose funding and others would receive far less than the formula calls for due to gain caps. Expanding and increasing funding for private school vouchers would mean those resources are not available to improve school funding or invest in other priorities such as expanding access to early childhood education.



Providing private school vouchers also creates inequities. Take for example a high school student in a high performing school district that receives limited state aid per pupil of \$1,000. If, under HB 200, a student's parents were to elect a private high school for their son or daughter and accept a voucher, the state would then pay \$7,500 in tuition and fees with any balance going into an education savings account for the student. HB 200 does not simply offer another choice; it favors the choice of private schooling with additional resources and incentives not available to other families.

Lack of effectiveness- There is no evidence to indicate that Ohio's expansion of voucher programs has resulted in improved performance for students who accept the vouchers. On the contrary, a July 2016 study of Ohio's released by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute shows poor results for Ohio's existing Ed Choice program. The study found that EdChoice participants fared worse on state tests compared to their closely matched peers remaining in public schools. The negative effects were greater in math than in English language arts and are persistent over time (not based only on setbacks common with a change in school). These results came despite participants on average who were higher achieving and less economically disadvantaged than those who were eligible but chose not to participate. Greatly expanding the eligibility of students to participate in voucher programs is unwarranted given the lack of success demonstrated by the current program.

HB 200 would be expanding "choice" for the sake of expanding choice. It would increase costs borne by taxpayers, create additional inequities and would not seem to improve performance for students who participate. For the reasons outlined above, I urge you to oppose HB 200.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I'd be happy to answer questions from the committee.