



**Agudath
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אגודת ישראל באמריקה

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OHIO OFFICE

Rabbi Yitz Frank
Ohio Director

June 20, 2017

To: Members of the Ohio House Education Committee
Re: HB 200, Create Opportunity Scholarship Program sponsored by Rep. Koehler

Chairman Brenner and esteemed members of the Ohio House Education Committee, I write today to express unequivocal support for House Bill 200, sponsored by Representative Koehler. While I am sure many of the witnesses will discuss some of the important details of this proposal, I wish to offer a few thoughts.

This bill will open educational opportunity to many families in Ohio that sorely need it. In theory, "school choice" is available to all Ohioans, except that for most families, when they don't like their assigned public school, they're stuck. They can't afford to move to a different district or pay for a private education. To the parent of the child who is being bullied or who feels their child isn't a good fit in the local public school, it doesn't matter what the district is rated on a report card. All that matters to that parent is that their child is not in the most appropriate setting for their learning needs. Continuing to enable parents to make that choice is good for kids and is good policy.

Last General Assembly, this body supported and enacted important steps to strengthen the EdChoice program. These steps to increase the scholarship amount were long overdue and increased support for families' choices and increased school participation. In fact, this, in part, resulted in the EdChoice Expansion (income based) Program being oversubscribed. However, the current model of school choice is at a crossroads. Our flagship school choice program, the EdChoice Scholarship, is based on the "low performing schools" model. While this program has undoubtedly increased choices for families, and, as intended, raised the level of academic performance in impacted public school buildings, we are undermining its promise through arbitrary limitations. Expanding opportunity to families based on an income limit is a better choice for Ohioans and taxpayers.

No one is forcing parents to leave, and the vast majority will not. But we ought not to stand in the way, if that is their desire. This poor policy must be reconsidered. House Bill 200 will extend opportunity to many families that desire other options. The components of this bill have been carefully vetted and weighed. The only reason to oppose this bill is if we think parents, who we trust to elect the members of the Ohio General Assembly, have no idea what they are doing. Thankfully, no one believes that and many studies confirm that. This bill equitably extends opportunity to the majority of Ohioans, and in doing so "raises all boats."

Thank you for reading and we look forward to your support.

Please contact me for any questions.

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