



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Media contacts at end of release

### **Public school leaders overwhelmingly support House plan for EdChoice vouchers**

COLUMBUS — The Ohio School Boards Association (OSBA), Buckeye Association of School Administrators (BASA) and Ohio Association of School Business Officials (OASBO) reacted today to the overwhelming response from Ohio public school leaders who came to Columbus to voice their support for the Ohio House of Representatives' plan to address the Educational Choice Scholarship Program (EdChoice). Participating in some 50 hours of public testimony on Ohio's failed private school voucher program, superintendents, treasurers and school board members rallied around a solution proposed by the House in Senate Bill (SB) 89.

"Our members are tired of the state's practice of taking money from local school districts to pay for private school tuition, and their advocacy over the last two weeks made this clear," said OSBA Director of Legislative Services Jennifer Hogue. "Recent changes to EdChoice have dramatically increased the number of public school buildings whose students are eligible for an EdChoice voucher. Over 1,200 buildings have been projected for eligibility in the coming school year, up from 255 just two years ago."

The EdChoice program uses a flawed state report card to award tuition vouchers to private school students paid for by school districts and taxpayers, regardless of the student's family income.

"It is unconscionable for the state's report card system to label over 1,200 buildings as 'failing' for purposes of hijacking local tax dollars from districts," said Kevin Miller, BASA director of governmental relations. "The legislature wisely scheduled public hearings to receive input on this important issue. Our members came from all over the state to share their objections regarding EdChoice and to tell of the many successes the students in their districts are experiencing."

OASBO Legislative Advocacy Specialist Barbara Shaner said, "The Ohio House of Representatives has come forward with a proposal to phase out the practice of using public tax dollars for private school tuition. And, just as important, it would end the current punitive EdChoice program that is based on report card results. Our members came out in force to support this laudable change. We are proud to join them in their strong endorsement of SB 89, the House solution to EdChoice."

## **Public school leaders overwhelmingly support 2/2/2/2/2**

SB 89 would halt the performance-based voucher program and instead grant vouchers for private school tuition based solely on family income, giving priority to the poorest students. The income threshold for qualifying for an income-based voucher would increase from the current 200% of the federal poverty level to 250%.

OSBA, BASA and OASBO members who spoke during the EdChoice hearings also rejected the Senate's answer to the EdChoice problems through its plan in House Bill (HB) 9. The Senate plan would reduce the 1,227 qualifying buildings to 420, effective for the next three years. That means the performance-based voucher program would continue to siphon money from public school districts. The plan also would increase the income eligibility threshold from the current 200% of the federal poverty level to 300%.

The associations said they are optimistic that the multitude of public education voices who testified during the nine public hearings on EdChoice were heard, and that the building performance-based voucher program will be eliminated as in SB 89.

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