



**House Education and Career Readiness Committee
Substitute HB 200 Opposition Testimony
Ohio School Boards Association
Buckeye Association of School Administrators
Ohio Association of School Business Officials
October 10, 2017**

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair Slaby, Ranking Minority Member Fedor and members of the Committee. My name is Jennifer Hogue, Director of Legislative Services for the Ohio School Boards Association (OSBA). Joining me today for this testimony and in answering your questions are Thomas Ash, Director of Governmental Relations for the Buckeye Association of School Administrators (BASA) and Barbara Shaner, Advocacy Specialist for the Ohio Association of School Business Officials (OASBO). Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today to express our opposition to Substitute House Bill (Sub. HB) 200.

On behalf of the members of our three organizations, we oppose Sub. HB 200. We believe strongly in Ohio's public education system. We do not support the use of vouchers to provide public funds to students for enrollment in private schools. Voucher programs lack the academic accountability of public schools. Further, voucher programs drain scarce resources that could be best utilized by Ohio's public schools where the vast majority of Ohio's students are educated. At a time when Ohio is experiencing scarce resources, further diversion of public funds to private education institutions is highly objectionable.

The bill caps the number of vouchers at 60,000, but with 10% automatic increases based on demand. LSC estimates the cost to be \$48 million and notes that, "the cost of the program will rise, potentially by a significant amount over the long term."

Sub. HB 200 would take Ohio's voucher program to a whole new level. A program that has been touted as providing "choice" options for students attending academically struggling public school districts would be turned on its face. Sub. HB 200 would create a statewide voucher program open to income qualifying students no matter how well their school district of residence performs academically. Not only do we believe Ohio should spend its scarce resources on improving the public school choices for all students, we adamantly oppose public support for private schools that may not do as well as the districts where they're located.

In fact, there is no compelling evidence of improved student performance in Ohio's current voucher programs. Attached to our testimony you will find a chart comparing the performance of

EdChoice voucher students to the performance of students in Ohio's public school. This information is publicly available on ODE's website, but seldom discussed. You will see that public schools are outperforming in each grade level in both math and reading. Despite this evidence, Sub. HB 200 would expand vouchers into every district regardless of how well the public schools perform.

Tom Ash will now continue our testimony.

The bill proposes a statewide voucher program where students qualify based solely on household income. Students from families earning up to 400% of the federal poverty level would qualify for a portion of the voucher amount. This means a family of four earning over \$98,400 per year would qualify. We know of no other government subsidy program with such a generous threshold.

The following is a chart with the income eligibility and corresponding voucher amount for a family of three:

Family Income (Family of Three)	Voucher Amount K-8	Voucher amount 9-12
\$40,840	\$5,000	\$7,500
\$51,050	\$4,375	\$6,563
\$61,260	\$3,750	\$5,625
\$71,470	\$3,125	\$4,688
\$81,680	\$2,500	\$3,750

Other Areas of Concern:

It may be difficult for parents to evaluate the academic merits of the private schools they are considering, making it unclear whether or not a voucher would be beneficial to their children. While public schools are accountable to the public for academic results, there is little such information about private schools. Part of allowing "choice" to parents should be the expectation that there are data available on school performance for parents to make an informed choice.

Additionally, even if a student wishes to receive a voucher to attend a given private school, it does not mean they will be accepted or be able to afford their share of tuition. Private schools retain the right to deny admission to students, or screen them out for a variety of reasons.

Sub. HB 200 causes further concern for the students who remain in the public school district. We believe that privatization in the name of choice jeopardizes the good of the whole. By subsidizing the removal of students away from public schools, districts' ability to serve the remaining students is threatened and the quality of the remaining students' educational experiences may be jeopardized.

Even though a student currently attending a private school would not qualify for a voucher in the next year, Sub. HB 200 may mean that many who have already made the decision to enroll their children in a private school will have their decision subsidized by taxpayers. Older students already attending a private school could enroll in a public school for a year and then qualify for a

voucher in subsequent years. The bill would allow those enrolling as a kindergarten student to immediately qualify for a voucher. This means that as the years progress, more and more students may qualify and use vouchers for their entire K-12 education career.

Barbara Shaner will read the remaining testimony.

We oppose the implementation of Education Savings Accounts for individual students using public taxpayer dollars. This benefit is not available to the thousands of students attending public schools and it has the effect of tying the hands of future legislatures by obligating state funds on a long-term basis. Moreover, the reserving of funds in privately owned accounts unnecessarily places stress on the state's scarce current resources when the funds could be used to better serve Ohio's public school students.

We would also note that the program could increase transportation costs for public school districts at the same time that state foundation funding would be reduced due to fewer students attending the public school. School districts are required to provide transportation to nonpublic schools located within thirty minutes of what would otherwise be the nonpublic student's assigned public school. While some state money would offset these costs through the transportation funding formula, we point out that state support of school bus transportation was dramatically reduced in this biennium through HB 49.

This bill strikes at the very heart of providing a free and appropriate public education to all Ohio students. It represents a watershed change in public education policy. Should state and local tax dollars be utilized to subsidize private school tuition even when excellent public options are available? Should public money be used to decrease the cost of private schools for those who are accepted and can otherwise afford tuition, regardless of the cost to the educational opportunities for the majority of students still served by the public schools?

Given the lack of evidence for academic improvement, the cloud of uncertainty facing the state budget and the potential negative impacts of Sub. HB 200, we believe the statewide expansion of vouchers is unwise and unwarranted.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for allowing us to express our concerns on Sub. HB 200. We urge the committee not to support this legislation. We will be happy to address your questions.

Attachment to OSBA, BASA & OASBO Opposition Testimony on Substitute House Bill 200

Grade Level/ Subject	EdChoice Student Proficiency	Public School Student Proficiency
3rd Grade Reading	38.26%	54.9%
4th Grade Reading	42.07%	57.5%
5th Grade Reading	39.11%	60.2%
6th Grade Reading	36.91%	54%
7th Grade Reading	34.64%	53.6%
8th Grade Reading	34.75%	47.5%
9th Grade Reading	46.99%	60%
10th Grade Reading	38.72%	53.4%
3rd Grade Math	37.26%	65.8%
4th Grade Math	35.38%	69.2%
5th Grade Math	21.93%	62.4%
6th Grade Math	24.73%	56.7%
7th Grade Math	28.63%	55.3%
8th Grade Math	30.69%	52.7%
9th Grade Math	31.37%	46.9%
10th Grade Math	19.83%	36%