

Proposed Ohio Budget Bill: HB 49 and Proposed Senate Bill 85: Opportunity Scholarship Program

Proposed Ohio Budget Bill: HB 49

The Catholic Conference of Ohio, composed of the Ohio Catholic Bishops and the Conference Staff, have reviewed the proposed Ohio Budget Bill and are encouraging Ohio legislators to give careful attention to issues that keep the needs of the poor and vulnerable in our society supported in the budget. They write: “This *preferential option for the poor and vulnerable* includes all who are marginalized in our nation and beyond- unborn children, persons hungry, homeless or unemployed, the elderly, persons in need of health care, persons with disabilities, persons in need of a quality education, immigrants and refugees, and persons who are victims of justice and oppression. “

Please visit <https://www.ohiocathconf.org> for more information and detail on the specific budget recommendations. Information on how to contact your state legislators can also be found on this site. We encourage you to let your voice be heard in support of the common good.

Proposed Senate Bill 85: Opportunity Scholarship Program

Our Catholic belief that parents are the primary educators of their children leads us to support School Choice programs for families so they can exercise their parental-choice rights in sending their children to the school that they deem the best fit for their children. Many states have either passed legislation or are considering legislation to support parental choice in education.

The Ohio Opportunity Scholarship, sponsored by Senator Matt Huffman, will greatly expand quality educational choice and increase access to quality education for low and middle-income families. It will consolidate the current two EdChoice programs and the Cleveland Scholarship program to create a single, income-based state scholarship program. Any student whose family is at or below 400% of the federal poverty guidelines will be eligible to apply for either a full or partial scholarship. Families currently on the EdChoice Scholarships will be grandfathered in.

Parents, Staff, and Friends of Catholic education are encouraged to become more informed and contact their state legislators to support passage of Senate Bill 85 and include its funding in the proposed Ohio Budget Bill. Every student who enters our schools is an opportunity to fulfill the evangelizing mission of the church, and every dollar that comes into our schools supports every child who attends our schools.

Visit the following sites for more information and directions on how to contact your state legislators.

<https://www.ohiocathconf.org>

<http://www.scoho.org>

Support for Families Who Choose Catholic Schools in Proposed Ohio Budget Bill: HB 49

“Over the years, the Ohio General Assembly and Ohio’s Governors have provided tax-supported assistance for pupils attending Catholic and other chartered nonpublic schools.

Ohio's elected officials have allocated funds for resources such as textbooks, tutoring, bus transportation, counseling and psychological services, administrative support, computer hardware and software, and teacher training. " (Ohio Catholic Conference)

Some of the items that need our support include the following:

- Support the inclusion of SB 85, the newly proposed *Opportunity Scholarship Program*, within the budget. (This program would begin in 2018-2019)
- Increase funding for both *Auxiliary Services* and the *Administrative Cost Reimbursement* programs by the same percentage increase as districts would receive, based on similar enrollment patterns, for public school student aid. (parity principle)
- Remove the proposed first-time cap on *Auxiliary Services*. (There has been no cap on *Auxiliary Services* since its inception for the 1967-1968 school year.)
- Restore the cap in the *Administrative Cost Reimbursement Program* to \$420 per pupil.
- Support the proposed increase in funding for the *EdChoice Expansion Program* so that low-income kindergarten students are eligible in the 2017-2018 school year.

For further information and a complete listing of items important to Catholic schools, please visit <https://www.ohiocathconf.org>. It is vital that our school families voice their support to their legislators.