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SCHOOL CHOICE EXPANSION LEGISLATION ANNOUNCED

Newly proposed legislation would eliminate caps on school choice programs and create a scholarship for students with disabilities

COLUMBUS, Ohio (February 16, 2011) – State Rep. Matt Huffman (R – Lima) held a press conference today where he announced his intention to reform and expand the state’s school choice programs.

Rep. Huffman’s proposal would combine the Cleveland and EdChoice Scholarship into a new statewide scholarship. Under Huffman’s plan, current scholarship students would continue to be eligible and current scholarship caps would be eliminated.

“The EdChoice and Cleveland Scholarships have proven incredibly popular with Ohio families,” said School Choice Ohio Executive Director Chad Aldis. “Today families interested in either program face uncertainty because of artificial limits placed upon the programs. This new program would both remove the caps and greatly expand the number of eligible students across the state.”

The new program would move away from determining student eligibility based upon the school grade of the student’s local public school and instead be based upon family income. The scholarship would allow low- and middle-income families to receive a scholarship worth up to 80% of the state per student funding amount (currently \$5,783), and students would be able to use the scholarship at participating nonpublic schools that meet state requirements.

“No child should be denied access to any school choice options that best meets their learning needs,” Rep. Huffman said. “Above all, this legislation is designed to extend private school choice to more lower- and middle-income families who have either never had a choice or have been making tremendous sacrifices to make that choice.”

In addition, Rep. Huffman’s proposal includes a scholarship for students with special needs that is modeled on Ohio’s Autism Scholarship Program. Tera Myers, the parent of a student with special learning needs, spoke at the press conference in support of the provision. Mrs. Myers said, “The Special Education Scholarship would allow parents like myself, the ability to choose what school would best fit their child’s individual needs.”

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Another innovation announced was the intention to allow the creation of education savings accounts when the scholarship funds in any particular year were not spent. This would encourage parents to find the best value and allow saved funds to be used for future educational expenses. Approved uses would include future private school expenses and postsecondary expenses at Ohio institutions.

Rep. Huffman's legislation is expected to be officially introduced next week.

About School Choice Ohio

School Choice Ohio (SCO) is committed to the goal of every child in Ohio having access to a quality education. Because this is not yet a reality, the organization works tirelessly to educate both the public and our leaders on the importance of empowering parents to find the best educational setting for the needs of their children. SCO believes that all parents should have the opportunity to choose which school is best for their children, regardless of their income level.