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**Media Contact:** Chad L. Aldis

**Phone:** 614-223-1555

**Email:** [caldis@schoio.org](mailto:caldis@schoio.org)

**Web:** [www.schoio.org](http://www.schoio.org)

## **Senate Proposal Creates Special Education Scholarship Program**

COLUMBUS, Ohio (May 31, 2011) – The Ohio Senate’s budget proposal released today includes language that creates a special education scholarship program, which would give parents of children with special needs the opportunity to choose the educational provider that best fits their child’s learning needs.

“We applaud the Ohio Senate for recognizing the importance of giving families of children with special needs access to school choice,” said School Choice Ohio Executive Director Chad Aldis. “While most students are being served well in their current public school setting, there are some who feel trapped. If this proposal remains in the budget, families will be empowered to find the best learning environment for their child’s unique educational needs.”

Ohio’s Autism Scholarship Program, created in 2003, already provides parents of a child with autism an opportunity to enroll their child in private education programs that provide specialized instruction and focus on the child’s social and academic needs. Currently, more than 1,600 students participate in the scholarship program.

“As a parent who knows first-hand the challenges of navigating the current educational options in our system, I can tell you that the creation of a Special Education Scholarship will open the doors for parents to finally have real options when it comes to the educational services for their children with Special Needs,” said Tera Myers of Mansfield, a parent of a student with special needs, during testimony before the Senate Finance Committee.

Scholarships amounts would be based on the student’s disability and associated educational needs. A portion of the money that would have been used to fund the child’s public education will follow the child to the private school. It is estimated that approximately 260,000 students would be eligible to receive a scholarship. The special education scholarship program would allow up to five percent of the students with special needs, approximately 13,000 students statewide, to access the private educational providers of their choice.

The Senate’s final budget will be determined next week. For more information about Ohio’s school choice options, visit [www.schoio.org](http://www.schoio.org).

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**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.