

Expansion of school choice clears the Ohio House

House passes budget expanding options for up to 18,000 children

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INDIANAPOLIS — On Tuesday, the Ohio House of Representatives passed its state budget, which contained a provision to create a program that would allow up to 18,000 students in over 30 districts to receive scholarships to attend the school of their parents' choice.

“Ohio has taken another giant step forward in giving families greater educational freedom,” Robert Enlow, executive director of the Milton and Rose D. Friedman Foundation, said. “The Speaker, the House leadership and the numerous legislators who supported the school choice provisions should be applauded. Their steadfast support testifies to their belief that families should be free to choose a school based their child’s needs, not their address.”

The expanded school choice component of the budget, based on a bill introduced by Rep. Dixie Allen (D-Dayton), would allow children in school districts deemed as on “academic watch” or “academic emergency” by the state to receive scholarships worth up to \$4,000 for K-4, \$4,500 for grades 5-8 and \$5,000 for grades 9-12. In addition the scholarship amount would increase annually with the Consumer Price Index. Currently, 34 school districts across the state would qualify for the program.

“The expansion of choice to families statewide is phenomenal, but just as important is the positive benefit to Ohio public schools,” Enlow said. “Every year we see new evidence that school choice benefits both students who get scholarships to attend private school AND students who remain in public schools. The greater competition will help catapult all of Ohio’s schools to the educational forefront.”

Under the budget, the Cleveland scholarship program would also be expanded to include students in the eleventh and twelfth grades. The funding for the program will increase to \$20.5 million by 2007, which will enable more children to enroll in the program. .

The budget passed in the House by a vote of 53 – 46 and now goes on to the Senate for consideration