

**Extended Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education**  
**Ohio House of Representatives**  
**July 18, 2012**

I want to Thank you, Committee Chair Amstutz, Vice Chair McClain, Ranking Member Sykes and other members of the Extended Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education.

My name is Ann Riddle and I have been with the Northwest Ohio Scholarship Fund for eight years. I am thrilled to be here in support of an effort that I believe can help to boost private investment and participation in affording greater access to private education without the use of public tax dollars.

The Northwest Ohio Scholarship Fund (NWOSF) is a privately funded nonprofit organization that awards need-based scholarships for students to use to attend private schools for kindergarten through the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. The program began in 1999 and has since awarded almost \$9 million in scholarships to more than 11,000 students. The program is one of 29 programs nationwide that work together as partners with the **Children's Scholarship Fund** in New York. This year we awarded scholarships to 728 students to attend one of 45 private schools.

We are the only K-8 scholarship program in NW Ohio serving families from Lucas (93%), Wood (5%) and Fulton (2%) counties. The scholarships are partial and families are required to pay a minimum of \$500 a year towards their family's tuition. Once a family is awarded a scholarship they can re-qualify through the 8<sup>th</sup> grade for their child and add siblings if they have a child in the program.

***The mission of the program is that all children, regardless of their economic circumstances, deserve access to quality educational opportunities and parents should have opportunity to choose the best school for their children.***

**Tax credits for education scholarship organizations would provide additional incentive for current donors as well as encourage new donors to support the program which would mean more scholarships for students to have the choice to attend the private schools that they feel will best prepare their children for success.**

Nearly a dozen similar programs have been successfully implemented across the country since 1997, including programs in our neighboring state of Indiana (2009) and Pennsylvania (2001). The popularity of the program in Florida (2001) has led to an expansion of the program by raising the cap on the total amount of tax credits available from the initial limit of \$50 million in 2001 to \$140 million in the most recent school year.

And these scholarships are making a difference in the lives of the recipients.

In 2010, NWOSF contracted with Frontier Education Solutions to do an independent tracking study of its early scholarship recipients, all of whom are low-income. These findings indicated that the majority of students experienced both academic and personal success following elementary school. The research discovered that 97% of those contacted had graduated from high school while 66% of them are currently enrolled in college and 25% have graduated from college. The program is investing in the NW Ohio community's future by providing access to educational choice, and the results of the study provide encouragement to continue and even expand this investment.

As many of you know, the current economic situation has greatly increased the need for these scholarships as many family salaries have been cut or at best remain stagnant while living costs

continue to increase such as food, and gas. **The program averages about 900 applications a year but this year we were only able to award 148 new awards or about 16% of those that applied. There is a great need for new scholarship options for families who are looking for better opportunities for their children.**

A tax credit would also give NWOSF the opportunity to increase the scholarship amount awarded and expand access to more families. The average tuition amount for an elementary private school in NW Ohio is \$3,400 and yet our maximum scholarship amount is just \$1,250. Keep in mind that only low-income families are eligible to apply; this leaves more than \$2,150 per child in tuition for families whose financial resources are already stretched.

With the successful implementation of a tax credit program, our local organization would stand ready to begin distributing scholarships to families in our area. In addition to NWOSF, Children's Scholarship Fund partners are also located in Cincinnati and Dayton.

I strongly encourage the committee to consider the adoption of a tax credit for education scholarships as a part of your deliberations on overall school funding, as this would allow for a greater partnership with private investment in education. I would be happy to answer your questions about the scholarship program. Thank you again for giving me the opportunity to speak to you about tax credits for education scholarships.

Ann Riddle  
Executive Director  
Northwest Ohio Scholarship Fund  
1933 Spielbusch  
Toledo, OH 43604  
(419) 244-6711 ext. 526  
ariddle@nosf.org