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*Advocating for Life, Faith, and Freedom in the Public Square*

**Ohio State Board of Education  
25 South Front Street  
Columbus, OH 43215**

**February 13, 2018**

**Subject: ECOT School closure crisis with 12,000 students displaced mid-year**

**To Members of the Ohio State Board of Education:**

The mid-year closing of Ohio's largest online school, ECOT, presents an educational crisis for 12,000 students and their parents. What has transpired since the events of January 18th is an unacceptable state of affairs for all involved. The magnitude of this crisis is equivalent to a major Ohio school district being forced to close in the middle of the school year. In fact, in the words of House Education Chairman State Representative Brenner, "This is the largest mid-term closure of a school in Ohio's history." That alone puts everyone who is responsible on notice to respond with all the resources of their offices and personnel to address the crisis.

It is obvious at this point that State Superintendent Paolo DeMaria and his administration had no contingency plan for these students. Parents and students, including the 2,287 seniors, are now scrambling to find other schools to enter. This crisis could have been averted by the ODE and the Kasich administration, had they been willing to work out an arrangement with ECOT to get them at least to the end of the school year for the sake of the 12,000 students, including the graduating seniors. Unfortunately, that is not the case.

We agree with the following Statement by State Representative Andrew Brenner who stated, "This could have been avoided had the department of education set up a payment plan that would have allowed the students to finish the school year at ECOT. I warned the Department of this months ago, so their lack of consideration makes me concerned about the long-term ramifications of School choice in Ohio. Since ECOT is now closing the Ohio Department of Education has the responsibility to make sure all 12,000 kids are quickly and properly placed into alternative situations."

Rep. Andy Thompson stated in the press conference, "We really don't have any great solutions for these students right now." It is obvious that the Ohio Department of Education was not prepared for this crisis, and had no workable plan for the 12,000 ECOT students that depended on them to make the right decisions for their education.

**Who is responsible for this crisis?**

- The Ohio Department of Education and Superintendent Paolo DeMaria
- Governor Kasich, because of his indifference and lack of action

**These questions still remain unanswered:**

**Where are the 12,000 ECOT students now?** What is happening with them? If they are enrolled in other schools, then the Ohio Department of Education must provide a complete report of verification for each student. Interim Master Attorney Myron Terlecky and the Ohio Department of Education need to ensure that the students' records are delivered properly to the school districts with time stamping verification of the status of each student.

**Many of the ECOT students have special needs and cannot return to public schools,** but want to complete their education. ECOT was meeting that need for these students. It is important that the officials who are responsible see to the needs of these students. The public is watching and will hold accountable the officials whose duty and responsibility it is to ensure the educational welfare of the students.

Thank you, President Elshoff and members of the Ohio State Board of Education.

Sincerely,

Chris Long  
President, Ohio Christian Alliance