



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## Bridgeway Academy Celebrates Ohio Autism Scholarship Increase in State Budget

**\$31 million in new funding for children with autism to be provided over the next two fiscal years**

**(Columbus, OH)** -- The newly-signed state budget bill for fiscal years 2022 and 2023 includes an increase in specialized educational funding for children with autism.

Currently, the Ohio Autism Scholarship provides \$27,000 in funding for children with a diagnosis of autism to access their educational services from specialized providers like Bridgeway Academy. As a result of this new amendment, that funding will now be increased to \$31,500 in FY22 and \$32,455 in FY23.

Bridgeway Academy Co-Founder and Co-Executive Director Abby David shared, “Bridgeway Academy is thankful to the members of the House, Senate, Conference Committee, State Senator Bob Peterson, and to Governor Dewine for making the Autism Scholarship a priority, and recognizing the positive financial implications this will have for families and their children.”

The amendment to the Autism Scholarship is a monumental step forward for Bridgeway Academy and other organizations who provide critical educational services to children with autism in Ohio. David added, “This increase in funding also allows for the continued growth and sustainability of our programs to better serve the community and students with autism in our state.”

According to David, one in 54 children are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. Children with autism benefit from specialized and individualized services and therapeutic interventions that providers like Bridgeway Academy offer in a holistic setting. Costs associated with these services can be a financial hardship for families, costing approximately \$60,000 each year. The last funding increase to the Autism Scholarship was in 2014.

“This amendment increase provides much-needed funding for our families, many of whom have moved to Ohio from other states because of this unique funding opportunity and the high quality services that we offer. This Scholarship helps students like ours receive the critical, individualized education services they need to reach their highest potential,” said Bridgeway Academy Co-Founder and Co-Executive Director, Erin Nealy. She added, “We are incredibly proud of our team, our families, and those in the community who advocated for this important movement.”



The increase will go into effect July 1, 2021. Bridgeway Academy plans to host a celebration with impacted families, community partners and lawmakers this summer.

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### **About Bridgeway Academy**

Bridgeway Academy provides a centered approach to education and therapy services for more than 300 individuals with autism and developmental disabilities in central Ohio. Since 2005, the organization's goal has been to help each individual reach their highest potential. Bridgeway Academy provides outstanding school day education for students in Preschool-Age 21, summer camp, and outpatient therapy services in speech, music, physical and occupational therapies, plus psychological services and evaluations. With their staff of over 200 highly-trained professionals, Bridgeway Academy envisions *a world of opportunity for every child and a community of support for every family*.