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COLUMBUS – Beginning Tuesday, February 1, parents of children who attend chronically low-performing Ohio public schools can apply to send their children to private schools using state-funded school vouchers.

According to School Choice Ohio, more than 84,000 children are eligible for the Educational Choice (EdChoice) Scholarship Program for 2011-12 but only 14,000 children can be accepted because of a state-mandated cap on program enrollment.

To be eligible for scholarships, children must attend any of the 197 schools — spread across 28 school districts — that have been classified as being in “academic watch” or “academic emergency” for two of the past three years.

A list is available at www.scohio.org, and the State of Ohio provides details at edchoice.ohio.gov. Students who currently participate in the EdChoice program must also apply

for re-enrollment.

To apply for the vouchers, which are worth up to $5,000 per year, parents must apply for their children to attend the private school of their choice. After the child is accepted, the private school will complete the process by sending the application to the Ohio Department of Education. Approximately 300 private schools are eligible to accept EdChoice scholarship recipients. A complete list of these schools can be found online at www.scohio.org.

The program, which was started in 2006, almost reached its student enrollment cap during the 2010-11 school year, with more than 13,000 children benefiting from vouchers. The enrollment period closes on April 15, 2011.

“We encourage parents to act quickly and enroll their children in this transformational program,” said Chad Aldis, executive director of School Choice Ohio.

“Given the high demand for the EdChoice Scholarship Program over the past several years, we anticipate that the enrollment cap will be met this year, unless there is a legislative improvement to the program that allows more children to participate.”

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.