

Hello, my name is Erika Gamble. I am a Columbus, Ohio native and cannot think of a better place to call home. The number of resources and opportunities here in Columbus are absolutely invaluable. One of the most priceless assets this state has to offer is education. My parents worked multiple jobs and made countless sacrifices in order to provide me with the best opportunity for a good education. They researched and educated themselves on various schools here in the city. They chose to invest in my education and my future by sending me to Catholic schools from the time I was in kindergarten until I graduated high school.

Not only did they make this choice for academics, but this choice was made for community. I did not just attend school. I was part of a real community that shared the common mission of unity through the preservation of academics. I was surrounded by other students whose parents also chose to make that investment. No matter how young I was, I knew how incredibly lucky I was to be part of that educational community. As I got older, I knew that one day when I had children, they too would have to experience this same faith-based educational life. Like I mentioned before, my parents acted selflessly to provide me with a Catholic education. This meant not buying their own home until just recently. This meant utilizing credit cards and living without unnecessary things. Due to these financial sacrifices that were made in order to pay for thirteen years of Catholic education my parents were unable to assist me with paying for college.

I believe in the power of a good education. I believe in the power of faith-based communities fused with academics. For these reasons, I eagerly pursued my bachelor's degree. Despite working a full-time job while attending school full time I was forced to take out student loans to pay for my education. I now pay over \$1,000 a month for those student loans. Despite this high payment, I still see my education as a true gift. I work for one of the top financial brokerage firms in the world. I work overtime whenever it is available, and I am able. My husband and I drive older vehicles with high mileage. I cried myself to sleep worrying about how I could possibly afford to provide my two sons with the gift my parents gave me. Spending hours and hours agonizing over where I could make cuts to our already tight budget. The answer was nowhere. Nowhere could I find the means to afford this educational opportunity for my boys that I dreamt of for so many years.

If I were unable to afford a Catholic education for my sons, they would have to attend an under performing school. They would not be able to have the same irreplaceable education I had. I was absolutely devastated. That was until I learned of the EdChoice scholarship program and found out that we would be able to apply for the scholarship and be able to send our boys to Catholic school. My husband and I finally felt as if we could see a glimmer of hope that we could maybe someday aid our children with money for college. Something our parents were unable to do. We would be able to set some funds aside-someday. With the money that would be saved due to the EdChoice scholarship, we may be able to ease the financial burden of higher education. Maybe one day, my sons Landen, five, and Parker three may not face the same challenges we are. I know my boys. I know that the best place for them to succeed is in a Catholic school.

I beg you to take action. Please do not take this gift away from my boys. Please do not impede on their future. Please do this for them and so many more children that deserve the right to a good

education. An education that their families feel in their hearts is the best for them. Please support EdChoice. Please FIGHT.

Thank you,

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