

Dear Primary and Secondary Education Committee Members,

I implore you to please support the opportunities provided by EdChoice vouchers and do not dismantle the program.

My family lives in a school district where our high school (Whetstone High School in Columbus City Schools), is under-performing. This year is the first year that Whetstone was added to the list of eligible schools, and we have made significant life choices based on that information.

Whetstone High School is not the option that will best suit the needs of my son, Tommy, who will be a high school freshman in the fall. Before the list of 2020-21 EdChoice eligible schools was published, I planned to move my family to a suburban school district. It was with a heavy heart that I decided to leave our home and community, but finding a high school that will best fit the needs of my children is my number one priority for the values my family upholds.

When I learned that Whetstone school was now eligible for EdChoice, my family was elated because it meant we didn't need to move from our home. Plans to list my home on the market were canceled. Instead I pursued applications to private schools that would best fit Tommy's needs. I took time off from work to tour schools and learn about the educational programs – as this was never researched before because it was never a financially viable option.

I found two schools that would best serve the educational needs of my son. As a single working mother with three children, these schools are not an affordable option without EdChoice. I paid a \$100 registration fee to both schools. I never would have applied to these schools and paid this money if I was not told that my family is eligible for the \$6000 voucher. In my household, we cannot waste money. \$200 can cover two utility bills in a month. It can cover 1.5 weeks of groceries for a family of four.

Waiting until April 1 to know if EdChoice will be available to my family has caused a tremendous amount of uncertainty and turmoil for my entire family. Will we still have to move to a suburban district? If so, the real estate market favors homes that are listed by March 1 for the spring buying season. If I wait, we have lost that prime timing, which will negatively affect the sale of my home. I will have spent registration fees to schools that we will no longer be able to attend due to cost. And, the most difficult of all, is my son Tommy has toured these educational institutions and is so excited to attend. A 14 year-old boy who is excited to attend a new high school – this is incredible! But now we're all in limbo. Tommy does not know where he will be going to school. My family doesn't even know where we will live.

The EdChoice eligible school list was released to the public, and plans were made based on that information that have major impact on the lives of families. To rip the opportunity out of Tommy's hands now is unconscionable.

No one knows the needs of my children more than I do. We need EdChoice. My community needs EdChoice. Please do not trap my children into a school that does not fit their needs. Please protect our choice.

I would be happy to discuss personally at any time. You may contact me at 614-307-4240, or annspence123@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Ann Guess