

Testimony Re: HB #9

02/12/20

TO Chairman Jones, vice Chair, Ranking Member, & Members of the Committee:

My name is Avi Goldstein and I am the rabbi of Beth Jacob Congregation in Columbus, Ohio. In my personal capacity, I am also a member of the Board of Columbus Torah Academy, one of just two Jewish day schools here in central Ohio. Additionally, in my personal capacity, I serve as a member of the advisory board for the Governor's Office of Faith Base and Community Initiatives where I work together with clergy and leaders of many faiths. It is an honor to offer testimony today in support of EdChoice.

All Americans understand the critical importance of a robust education. In Jewish tradition education is considered one of the most important, solemn obligations a parent has towards a child. From time immemorial the Jewish People have been willing to go to superhuman lengths to ensure that the next generation has a sophisticated education. Our commitment to this value has been true even in eras of outright persecution, such as the formation of Jewish schools in ghettos and DP camps. Subtler, but no less brutal attacks on Judaism, most recently behind the Iron Curtain, also saw heroic efforts by Jewish parents to educate their children. The Jewish People's commitment to outstanding education cannot be overstated.

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EdChoice plays a critical role in our community to ensure that this type of education is possible. EdChoice recognizes that it is ultimately the parents who are best suited to help their children choose a school that best suits their needs.

EdChoice recognizes that we would be failing our duties both as parents and as a society by keeping children trapped in schools that do not work for them. Of course we remain strong supporters of public schools and we support the State's effort to ensure quality public education, however that can never become an either/or choice. EdChoice is critical in our community but also for many others and helps parents educate each child as appropriate, or in the words of King Solomon in Proverbs: "Educate each child according to their (individual) way."

A sudden withdrawal of EdChoice funding by reconstituting the rules would deal a devastating blow to our community. Hard working, middle-class families, who struggle to make ends meet and pay the bills, would find themselves facing an almost insurmountable burden and tortuous decisions, if the funding for this program was diminished. EdChoice provides the vital lifeline that these families need to make "the right" education possible for their children and meet this most solemn obligation to the next generation.

When Moses was on the brink of the Exodus and the Jewish People were about to be freed, rather than deliver a stirring address, he told them that the key to forming a nation and thriving as a free people is educating the next generation. Moses' advice was true then and remains true today. I thank you all for your support for EdChoice

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in the past and respectfully and strongly urge you to maintain the program's funding. I am happy to take questions.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rabbi Avi Goldstein