

Hello Education Committee Members

I am writing to ask that you continue to support the Ed Choice program. Currently our daughter attends Saints Robert and William Catholic School in the City of Euclid and has benefited from being in that school in a way the public school systems around us cannot compete with. She is 6 and struggles with change and anxiety. The first month of school was very hard for her while she adjusted to being in school for a full day, to a new environment, and new classmates. We went from daily panic attacks and tears to her being excited to be at school. Over the course of the school year we have learned she is a nervous test taker and her anxiety around this is impacting her test scores. The school has been working with us on this and there are constant ongoing efforts to prevent this from holding her back.

Through all of this, the teachers and the staff at this school have been and continue to be our partners in helping her adjust and grow. I can't stress or explain the depth of the help and attention she received and still gets. It wasn't just her teacher who helped her, it was every teacher and staff member she encountered. They learned her name, they talk to her every time they see her to help her feel welcome, they encourage her daily, and they offer endless suggestions on what we can do to help her adjust and succeed. They got us through the first month and because of that our daughter actually likes school. In any other environment she might still be crying every day and hating school. Now she is set up for success and instead of set up to fail in an environment that is not best for her.

Our current public school system just got two of their four elementary schools grades up to Cs which is fantastic for our city and for the future of the kids in the city. But, the reality is that the environment at all the schools in our public school system is not the best for a lot of kids; I know it's not the right one for mine. The schools' class sizes are too large, the schools lack resources, and the teachers are overworked/underpaid/stressed out. Behavioral problems are a big concern and teachers don't have the help they need to address those issues and still provide quality education. A child like mine who is academically advanced but has anxiety would not get the help needed to succeed. Her test scores alone don't tell a true story of her ability as a student.

I understand the current political pressure to make drastic cuts and changes to the Ed Choice program or to eliminate it all together. While I can appreciate the public schools desire to have the Ed Choice funds back, especially in a school district like ours which just lost a desperately needed levy, I know that looking at this as a strictly financial issue is short sighted and just harmful. The reality is that if the Ed Choice program is limited or drastically changed and less kids can use it, this will hurt the public schools. Yes they will see an increase in enrollment and therefore an increase in funding but that will not outweigh the cost of educating the increased number of students. The funding from Ed choice will not magically fix the public schools funding and resource issues. All the money they would gain would need to be spent on providing for an increased student population. Overcrowded schools would be even more crowded and everyone will suffer as the school resources get stretched even thinner. Keeping any kid trapped in a public school environment that is not able to meet their needs is a waste of resources and hurtful to the future of the kids and the community.

Please show your support and help keep the Ed Choice program in Ohio. It has been a great benefit for our family and for countless others as well.

Sincerely,

Mary Anne Ott