

Hello,

I truly wish I could be present to personally testify in support of the EdChoice program.

My family takes education and whole child nurturing/growth very seriously. We did not wish to give our children to just any system to be another face in the classroom. We chose to homeschool our children from the very beginning, which we believe has offered them a broader and more hands on educational experience. Tragically, however, our oldest daughter succumbed very suddenly to strep 6 years ago and our world was terribly rocked. From that moment on, my capacity for educating my children was overshadowed by grief and it's quite tangible effects. I learned my great need to reach out for help. At the time, our neighborhood had increasingly become unsafe, and I did not wish to send our kids to our neighborhood school. We discovered that our younger 2 students were eligible for EdChoice Expansion, but would need to seek out area scholarships for our older daughter, in order to send her to our school of choice. This worked until I began working again, now we still cannot afford tuition, but are outside of the financial parameters for expansion or scholarship. We are so thankful that our children have found a new niche of learning, and we are enjoying the opportunities and rigors of their coursework at the private school, so we were desperate to make something work for them to continue. We had to enroll in a public school online for a time, thinking it might be an option, but it just wasn't working. Then last year our neighborhood school went on the EdChoice designated school list and we qualified for the Voucher program, I cannot even tell you the relief it has brought us! We are so thankful that our tax dollars could follow our students to our preferred school.

I believe school choice makes schools work hard and compete for the money that they receive. I appreciated the accountability that the EdChoice program required of schools and am appalled that now that it has reached some of our suburban schools, that they are getting a "pass" from this accountability standard. It was fine with them as long as it was not them. They had the warning and the years to make the grade, and now that they must be accountable, the standards that were set in place to protect our children are being removed in the name of school budgets. I believe schools should earn the right to teach our children. I believe allowing our tax dollars to follow our students to each family's school of choice is an appropriate action to improve the face of education.

Late this past fall our family moved into a district that was newly placed on the EdChoice Designation list. We purposely moved there as we understood our EdChoice Vouchers would follow us & the move placed us in better proximity to our school of choice as we are HIGHLY involved there now. Now, those schools are no longer designated, and our family is left trying to figure out what to do. We would not have chosen this district for their schools, and we are left wondering if we have now lost all opportunity to send our children to their school of choice. Friendships, teacher relationships, and quite frankly, family that has formed around us after a time of great pain and need may be taken away from us with this most recent EdChoice decision.

I cannot even tell you the difficulty that losing EdChoice now will cause for our family. I do not believe it is right to remove the program. It appears that the government is "knee-jerk" reacting to the complaints of school budget boards and not following through with the standards they created. What is the point of

school accountability if you do not enforce it the first time it is tested? The public school system will only get worse if you do not allow them the pain of working for change and competing for their students.

I know MANY families who had HOPE for their children to move out of VERY difficult school situations with this most recent list, and those hopes have been dashed, and their children disappointed to have to have to maintain their very difficult schooling circumstances.

I implore you to please vote to maintain EdChoice and to please vote to maintain accountability to these most recently designated schools.

Most sincerely, and with great thanks for the relief EdChoice has provided our family in a time of great pain, and with great hope that we, and other families, can continue to be afforded the opportunity of school choice,

Jennifer Kutz
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