

Chairman Jones and the members of the House Bill 9 Conference Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today regarding Ohio's EdChoice Scholarship program. My name is Julie Unger, and I am here today because making changes to the EdChoice program for the 2020/2021 school year impacts my family and many others in ways you may not be aware of.

- My husband and I live in Stow which is a suburb of Akron with our two children. Our daughter is in 9th grade and our son is in 8th grade. They both attend Catholic schools. We have always paid for the tuition on our own and have never received any financial assistance from the state or from the local public schools.
- Our son will be enrolling at St Vincent St Mary High School in Akron in the Fall as a 9th grader. All financial aid and scholarship paperwork for incoming freshman was due to St Vincent St Mary High School on December 3rd 2019. It is my understanding that these deadlines are set by the Cleveland Diocese so it is the same for all Catholic high schools in the Diocese. I cannot begin to express to you how critical this financial aid process is for families that are considering Catholic high schools. We submitted applications for scholarships and financial aid through the school as that is crucial for us to pay for two children in Catholic high school. We found out on December 10th that our son and daughter are now eligible for the EdChoice scholarships because Stow High School is now on the EdChoice Scholarship Designated School List for 2020/2021 school year. This is truly a blessing as that will cover half of the tuition for high school. The tuition is \$11,750 per student per year.
- The St Vincent - St Mary Tuition Assistance Committee reviews all the scholarship and financial aid applications for incoming freshman during December. The EdChoice scholarship is part of the equation for providing each family with a tuition assistance package. All financial aid and scholarship decisions for incoming freshman have been determined and were mailed out by January 8th 2020. Families make Catholic high school decisions based on the tuition assistance awards letter.
- Since my son was eligible for the EdChoice scholarship in December 2019 he did not qualify for the Family and Memorial scholarships that were available. These scholarships are 4 year renewable and are only available to incoming freshman. He may have also qualified for additional financial aid.
- Changing the EdChoice rules now for 2020/2021 and eliminating the opportunity does not bring back the scholarship and financial aid opportunities that we missed out on in December 2019. Changing the EdChoice rules now will financially impact my family for the next 4 years.
- We never anticipated this whirlwind of events over the last 2 months that is impacting how we are going to cover over \$23,000 a year for two children in Catholic high school. Changing the laws and adding the EdChoice opportunity for us in 2019 was a blessing for sure. But then changing the laws again 7 months later and taking it away right after the critical financial aid process for incoming freshman is done is unacceptable.
- High school registration for our son and all the other 150+ freshman is on March 5. At that point we will make a commitment to St Vincent St Mary High School. My hope is that by then everyone will know that the EdChoice promise will be kept and parents will not have to worry about how they will afford tuition. Sending children to a Catholic high school is a major financial decision for many families.
- Families have made decisions and plans based on the EdChoice information as provided by the Ohio Department of Education. Please keep that promise you made to families for the 2020/2021 school year.

Chairman Jones and members of the Committee, I'd like to thank you again for allowing me the opportunity to speak today on this issue. I appreciate your work on this matter, and would be happy to answer any questions you may have.