

Good Afternoon,

As president of ten Catholic elementary schools and two Catholic high schools, I would like to share the sentiments of the thousands of students, parents, grandparents, staff, and friends of Stark County Catholic Schools on Friday, February 14th. We believe that parents are the primary educators of their children, and that parental choice in education is a fundamental right. Our belief has always been that families should choose the educational path that best fits them, regardless of their zip code or income level.

The EdChoice Scholarship program attempts to create equal opportunity. These scholarships allow families, who may have felt previously that Catholic schooling was not accessible to them, the ability to make a choice about their child's education. Over the last three decades, the state of Ohio has supported several educational choices such as charter schools, homeschooling, online education, vocational schools, community learning centers, and open enrollment among public districts. The ability to choose a private or parochial school is just one of many education options afforded to families. School choice empowers families to select the educational path that best fits their child's needs.

Meeting the needs of students, and realizing improved educational outcomes for the state of Ohio, as a whole requires a myriad of school choice options. School choice improves educational outcomes in private and public settings. Using random assignment, the American Federation for Children determined that choice is favorable for our education system. The majority of studies demonstrated improved test scores for school choice participants. Twenty-one studies examined the impact of school choice in public schools; twenty of those showed an improvement in public school outcomes.

We believe that Catholic schools provide a unique student and family-centered environment which is valued by all of our families. Marginalized families realize great benefits from our school settings. According to the University of Notre Dame, Catholic schools close the achievement gap for poor and minority students, and do so at a fraction of the cost of public schools.

Further, the same study by the University of Notre Dame found that Catholic schools instill a lifelong commitment to faith and virtue, and encourage civic engagement, which includes a higher likelihood to vote. Our ability to encourage engaged citizens benefits our local community and beyond.

Civic engagement, supporting families in need of educational choices, and improved educational outcomes are just a few of the reasons the state of Ohio has always valued school choice. We need the EdChoice program just as much now as we did yesterday. Every parent, grandparent, or guardian should have the ability to make a decision for their child's future today that will make a difference in our community tomorrow.

Attached is my witness slip. Please let me know if you require any additional information.

Sincerely,

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Dan Gravo

President

Stark County Catholic Schools

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