

Chairman Jones and members of the House Bill 9 Conference Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today regarding Ohio's EdChoice Voucher Program. I am Matt Geha, superintendent of Springfield Local Schools (Lucas), and father of two children in Sylvania Public Schools (Lucas).

Springfield Local Schools is an Excellent school as rated by ODE's report card from 2008 through 2012. After report card changes, some people define Springfield Schools as failing and falling into EdChoice for the 2020-2021 school year. The metrics used for rating public school systems is misleading and appears to be "creating failing school districts".

Springfield Local Schools, like all public schools, has great pride in educating all students who enter our doors. There are many types of students that fill the classrooms of public schools in Ohio. Of Springfield's 4,000 students, many have great challenges, and we are excited to educate everyone. We have four classrooms for students with Multiple Disabilities (MD), challenged with mobility, vision, hearing, communication, and severe health issues. We have three specific Autism classrooms, serving and accommodating children with severe autistic behaviors. We have four Cross Categorical Resource Room (CCRR) classrooms that service and accommodate children with a number of disabilities from OHI Major to Intellectual Disabilities (ID). We have two Emotional Disturbed (ED) classrooms that educate, service, and accommodate students with emotional disturbances; these disturbances range from parental drug/physical/emotional/sexual abuse to student mental health issues that cause the child to display considerable negative behaviors. Springfield Local Schools has 700+ students identified as Disabled by the state of Ohio and the federal government via IDEA. We accept every child detailed above.

The cost to educate a "typical" child in Springfield Local Schools is \$10,422, with \$2,300 per child provided by the state of Ohio. Springfield Schools is "Capped" and receives roughly 66% of the state's own formula. To educate a child with Autism, Multiple Disabilities, an Emotional Disturbance, the cost is much greater and in many cases approaches Tens of Thousands of Dollars; we do have multiple cases a year where we breach \$100,000.00 to educate, service, and accommodate an individual child. The state per-pupil allotment for Springfield Local Schools, and the IDEA or Title 6B money for specific student disability categories, comes nowhere near the cost to educate many children in the state of Ohio. In almost all cases, the state and federal money provided does not reach even 50% of the cost to educate a child with Special Needs. I hear too many times that EdChoice will save the district money since we don't have to educate a typical child. And, will the students detailed above be accepted into a school who accepts EdChoice Vouchers?

In Springfield Local Schools, and all public schools in Ohio, every student is tested via the Ohio State Testing Model; this model is very extensive, encompassing every student in grades three through twelve. But please know, Springfield Schools tests every student detailed above and is accountable for their progress, test scores, and lack thereof. We test every Autism, MD, ED, CCRR, Hearing and Vision Impaired child, and their data has been used to "qualify" a school and district for EdChoice Vouchers. Are these children going to be accepted for an EdChoice Voucher at an "Elite" private high school? Are EdChoice Voucher accepting private schools accountable to the same performance based measures as public schools? Public schools are accountable to Attendance of every student detailed above via House Bill 410. Are EdChoice Voucher accepting private schools accountable to the same Attendance criteria for all students?

Did you know that Students with Disabilities in the state of Ohio are eligible to stay in high school until age 22, regardless of the number of years in high school? If the IEP team determines it's beneficial for the child to stay in school, the student may remain in school until reaching the age of 22 years old. Did you know that the current Ohio Report Card counts these students as non-graduates after their fourth year and negatively affects the school and district, placing them in EdChoice status and labeling them "Failing"?

Springfield Local Schools currently has 115 foster students in its care. Did you know that Springfield Local Schools had 300 students enroll in the district for the current 2019-2020 school year in grades one through twelve? This did not include enrolling kindergarten students. The transience of today's families and students is growing significantly, and many students are attending up to four different school districts/educational opportunities within an educational career. Public schools are accountable (state testing, behaviors, attendance) to this transience, regardless of the amount of time a student rests in one place.

Current scholarships that Springfield Local Schools are under are costing the district significant dollars. With only 47 students on the John Peterson and Autism Scholarships, the district is paying out \$763,000.00 in fiscal year 2020. \$763,000.00 is exorbitantly more than any state or federal payment that would assist in the education of these students; these dollars were taken straight from the district's foundation payment. Did you know that the public schools systems do all the IEP and ETR work for students participating in the scholarship programs? This is an extreme cost to district and an extreme amount of time these intervention teachers, school psychologists, and administrators are not working in the district.

If Springfield Local Schools were to fall into EdChoice designation for the 2020-2021 school year, we would lose an estimated \$1,000,000.00; this estimate is for students who have never attended Springfield Local Schools. Our ability to continue the efforts we make with Students With Disabilities and other disadvantaged students would be drastically cut.

We ask that you take the time to change the current EdChoice Voucher program and not steal from public schools to fund private options for students. What will be left in the public schools for those who are not accepted into the private school? What will be left those students removed from the private school option and returned to their public school? Will the private school even consider the student who missed 30 days last school year? What about the Autistic, MD, ED, CRRR, Hearing or Vision Impaired student?

Springfield Local Schools accepts and meets the needs of every student who resides in the district. We are already at an economic disadvantage being a Capped district with the current state funding model.

Chairman Jones and members of the House Bill 9 Conference Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide input regarding Ohio's EdChoice Voucher program and strengthening our Ohio public schools. I am happy to address any of your questions. Respectfully, Matt Geha.

