

Distinguished members of Ohio's 133rd General Assembly,

My name is Dan Heintz. I am happy to share that I am a K-12 product of Ohio's great public schools. I am also proud to say that I am a public school teacher at Chardon High School. Finally, I am honored to serve my neighbors as a member of the Cleveland Heights - University Heights Board of Education. As you can see my friends, public education flows through my veins and animates my spirit.

Our Cleveland Heights - University Heights Schools have suffered under the burden of EdChoice in a way that few other districts have. Currently, 33% of our state funds are being diverted as a result of EdChoice. Our schools have fallen victim to a well intentioned, but poorly conceived cult of accountability. Nowhere perhaps are these measures more inappropriately punitive than in Cleveland Heights - University Heights.

Cleveland Heights High School is an EdChoice school for one reason: Graduation Rate. Given this, one would expect our graduation rate to be low. It's not. For the past 2 years in fact, our graduation rate has been higher than the state average, yet the state's formula has nonetheless labeled ours as an underperforming EdChoice High School.

The College Board is the non-profit organization behind the SAT test, as well as all of the Advanced Placement coursework that many of our students take advantage of. Distinguished members of the General Assembly, four weeks ago, The College Board identified nine Ohio High Schools as AP Honor Roll High Schools. Cleveland Heights High School, labeled by the State as EdChoice eligible school, was one of these nine.

So, contrary to the State of Ohio's label, the College Board doesn't seem to think that ours is an underperforming high school at all, but what do America's colleges and universities think? Are they confident that the graduates of Cleveland Heights High are prepared for success? You bet they are, and they put their money where their mouth is. My friends, Cleveland Heights High's class of 2018 was offered a combined 10.4 million dollars of college scholarships. 10.4 million dollars. And the class of 2019 beat them! Our class of 2019 (roughly 350 students) was offered 12.1 million dollars in scholarship offers.

So, our graduation rate is above the state average, The College Board identifies us as an AP Honor Roll School, and our grads pulled in over 22 million dollars in scholarship offers over the past 2 years. But our own state government has determined that this is such a disappointing school that we need to provide a financial escape hatch in order for students to attend a private school. I simply cannot imagine that this is what we had in mind as the EdChoice system was being designed.

The pundits tell us that vouchers improve education by introducing competition. The narrative they promote is that families use vouchers to leave low performing public schools in order to attend higher performing private schools. This narrative is pure sophistry. Facts are stubborn things, and the facts simply don't support the narrative.

First, the overwhelming majority of our EdChoice voucher recipients are not leaving our schools at all, because leaving our schools would require them to have entered them in the first place. Committee members, 94% of our EdChoice vouchers are being used by students who have never been enrolled in one of our public schools. 94%.

Furthermore, the private schools that receive this windfall of Ohio tax dollars are not always higher performing. According to the Ohio Department of Education, 61 of our students use EdChoice vouchers to attend a school whose 5th grade scores are lower than those of our district. That's nearly a quarter of a million dollars! So let's be clear, these people are not running from a failing school, they're running from a tuition bill. Again, I cannot imagine that this is what we had in mind as the EdChoice system was being designed.

Ladies and gentlemen, my two part request very simple:

First, please rethink how we measure our public schools. And as you think that over, please come visit Cleveland Heights High. Second, if vouchers are to remain in the mix, please fund them directly from the state's operating budget. The work that districts like mine do is hard enough without the additional challenges of depleted state aid.

Committee members, I thank you for your service to our state, and for your time today. If you have any questions, I am at your service.

