

Chairman Jones and 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 Kathleen Knox, and I am here today because it's important to my family you be made aware just how much the Ed Choice scholarship could make a difference in so many lives including our own.

Fifteen years ago, my husband and I made the decision to send our children to Holy Family School in Stow. It's not a decision we made easily because we have four children. Financially, we knew this would be difficult. Not just for the nine years each of them would spend at Holy Family, but we also knew we'd be sending them to one of the three Catholic high schools in our area. A thirteen year commitment per child. This would require major sacrifices on our part—sacrifices we were willing to make.

You see not every private school family is the family that can write a check and pay for tuition in one fell swoop. In fact, very few of us are. Most of us require help—a great deal of it. In fact, most of us use payment plans to send our children to private schools. For my family, this has been a financially difficult time over these fifteen years while we've paid this tuition. We live paycheck to paycheck and sometimes hope and pray our checking account doesn't overdraw before the tuition check comes out. That's our reality. And we aren't alone.

So we continue to scrape together what we can. We ask for financial aid every year. We still pay our property taxes for a school district our children have never attended. We do all this because our children attend a school that educates them based in FAITH. They're educated on a grading scale that is more difficult than our public school thereby challenging them every day. We do this because they're educated in small classrooms where they get personalized attention they wouldn't otherwise get in our public school district.

So finally, in November of 2019, relief! The announcement was made that would change our financial lives as we still have two children in high school. The Ed Choice scholarship literally means my family can breathe financially. We rejoiced only to have it snatched away at the last minute—the timing I might add too late for incoming freshmen to apply for aid and scholarships as that deadline was December 1, 2019 and now the *Ed Choice* deadline is past the deadline for current high school students to apply for aid and scholarships as that is March 1. This puts both the families and schools in a precarious position.

It's incredibly frustrating as I've been following this story unfold, and I read public school districts and teacher unions and interest groups come here repeatedly to protest to you, some the very existence of the Ed Choice scholarship, because to them that is the problem! Four years ago, my school district received failing grades on their report card in 2016. And then again in 2017, 2018 and now 2019. My husband and I are both products of the public schools. I teach at a public university. I know and value what a public education can be. However, if this is where their attention is, then it's the students who suffer. And yet, here the schools come to argue to you that my children shouldn't receive financial help for the education I've chosen for them because my public school is clearly unable to provide it!

As I stated in my opening, many, many private school families look like we do financially. We are in that middle class that makes too much money to qualify for the income-based scholarships some of you have proposed, but we don't make enough to pay for this tuition on our own. We need help!

You made a promise to our family in November when you put our district on the Ed Choice list. You made a promise to thousands more families who saw that notification as a way to a better education for their students, and they made plans and applied to new schools. Please keep that promise and help us provide that education for our students.

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