

Dear Committee

My family chose EdChoice because it provided an alternative, a Christian choice, to our school options. I wanted my daughter to pray, learn about Biblical principles and a Christian worldview. Our public school is, and should remain, free of religion and its implications and expectations. The cost was however prohibitive as my husband was diagnosed with cancer just after we turned in our application to our private school of choice. We are now living on his Disability income, my part time paycheck and I am able to continue my college education fulltime. We would have not been able to afford the opportunity for our daughter if it weren't for EdChoice.

I loved our elementary school but as a child continues on to Middle and High schools the sheer numbers in classes, the individual attention that is sacrificed, the inclusion and struggling staff of mental, physical and emotionally-challenged children all trickled down to affect even the kids who need less attention. They are ignored as the "problems" grow with each year. A smaller school with more individual attention, faith-based and high expectations was my priority.

Providing an option in education and the transfer of funds of tax payer dollars to private schools shouldn't be an issue. They can lessen the burden on over-populated schools allowing other children to gain more individual attention. Income based programs also allow a family that is struggling to raise the next generation to a higher level. The old saying "Not a handout but a hand up." My hope is that my child will not raise her family in the poor or lower middle class because of a Christian, high quality, high-expectation, lower stress environment. This will boost yet another child out of poverty in the next generation. My husband and I are better off than our single, very poor mothers from years ago. Through hard work and dedication, my child will likely have a better education and then even higher expectations for her child.

Public education is not evil or bad. It is sick. It needs strong medicine and a lot of extra attention. Funds need re-evaluated and likely redirected. Teachers need more help, inclusion should be re-evaluated and then changes addressed. Special education and mental health services need increased. Policies(like government laws and such) need brought more current to address kids of today. They are being raised in a fast-paced, everything-at-their-fingertips world and the rules and laws in place address a slower, calmer, more willing student. Students of yesteryear had a parent at home or a family nearby to help. They were not locked in homes often alone with internet and video games while parents worked 2 jobs just to pay rent and health insurance then they can't afford daycare and food. We need to address these families. EdChoice allows parents to choose the best option for their child. Why can't a parent choose a school even when their school isn't bad "enough" to allow a choice? The districts are in desperate need of attention. Failing isn't an option for me. EdChoice was likely the alternative to homeschooling. The public choices I have without it aren't really a choice in my eyes. I hope EdChoice will remain an option for families like ours. I hope my daughter will get this chance to prove that she was worth the scholarship.

Have a wonderful day!

Nikki Snell
parent to a 3rd grade student at GCCS