

Hello,

I am writing to you in regards to the upcoming hearings being held in Columbus surrounding the EdChoice Program. I am not able to physically participate in the hearings at the House of Representatives but felt it was imperative that I share my story.

My husband and I have 4 children. The three youngest children have attended a private catholic school since kindergarten. The oldest graduated from the Fairport Harbor Exempted Village School District almost 2 years ago. We have experience with both private and public education. It discourages me to see in the opinions of others saying that families that have never had children in public schools are taking advantage of the EdChoice program. I've seen statements that reflect that the school districts are frustrated because they feel that since a child has never been a part of their school district they should not have to cover the cost of their education through this program. My husband and I are taxpayers and have consistently supported and voted for all school levies presented in our district. We know that the school districts are important to our neighborhood and we want the schools to be successful. However, since we have lived in Fairport Harbor, the schools have continued to struggle and provide poor education and programming. We experienced this with our oldest. He struggled in the Fairport school system and we do not believe that he was provided the attention, education, and skills needed to move forward as an adult. When my husband and I researched school options for our three younger children we ultimately decided, due to the lack of Fairport's opportunities, that a private Catholic education was best for the following reasons:

1. Our third child, Gabriel, had significant speech delays prior to entering kindergarten. We tried to work diligently with the Fairport Harbor Exempted Village School district to ensure that he was kindergarten ready. The Fairport school system was difficult to work with and we did not feel that they appropriately supported Gabriel's needs at that time.
2. The Fairport school system, at the time our children were entering school, did not provide the education and programming we felt our children needed/deserved. The school lacked services and the outcomes of their students were low.
3. The Fairport district had been failing for years and in our opinion did not (and still would not) provide the level of education our children deserve.
4. As parents, we know best the needs of our children and what type of education benefits them.
5. We want our children to participate in a school that provides a family atmosphere, academic rigor (including an outstanding arts and STEM education) and a culture that has an emphasis on forming the whole person.

Our family has made many sacrifices throughout the past 10 years in order to ensure our children receive the level of education they deserve. This past year was the first year that we were able to utilize the EdChoice program. We are grateful that the program finally included our home school district. We have been able to utilize one year of EdChoice for two of our children and have included this program in our family budget for the upcoming year for the all three children for school year 2020/2021. Changing the rules of the program at this date is unfair and poor public policy.

Thank you for taking the time to hear our perspective and we appreciate your support of educational choice in Ohio.

Sincerely,

Danette Richards