

*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. My Name is Eric Forman and I am the principal of Onaway Elementary School in Shaker Heights as well as a resident and parent.*

*I am here this morning in support of my community and first and foremost the amazing staff, teachers, parents, and most importantly the phenomenal students at my school, a number of which are here today as well.*

*There are a couple of points that I want to make this morning:*

*The first of these is that by any measure, Onaway like many other newly added EdChoice eligible schools is not failing. In fact, it is thriving.*

*Onaway is a vibrant, happy school where our diverse student population feels known, loved and cared for. A school where teachers are empowered to bring themselves into the classroom to enrich student lives. Our inclusion on this list for the upcoming year, still continues to blow my mind.*

*As an example Onaway was recently recognized by the Cleveland State University Urban Education Center as one of the top performing schools in all of Northeast Ohio when taking into account all factors that impact public schools including but no limited to socioeconomic status. These factors are poorly if at all accounted for in our states failed school report card system. That being said, as flawed and broken as it is, that very report card system gave Onaway an overall grade of B. I am not sure in what system or world a score of B is deemed as failing. Our appearance on the EdChoice list is by itself a sign of how incredibly broken this system and program are. Additionally, Onaway has improved on all state measures over the course of the past 4 years. This was accomplished through the hard work of our staff and students without losing the core values that make our school what it is. Isn't this what any state should want? Schools Leaders and Teachers with the agency to improve outcomes for kids and at the same time design*

*a full and rich curriculum that matches their community? Our inclusion as EdChoice flies in the face of this.*

*This brings me to my second point: The EdChoice expansion will have dynamic and drastic impacts on public schools and school districts. It impacts our ability to retain and attract residents, Pass school levies, and with the unknown loss of funding plan for appropriate staffing and programming. This is not tenable for schools and will directly hurt children.*

*Shaker schools are blessed to be supported by a city and community that understands and values good public schools. When voters go to the polls they understand that those property tax dollars will go back into their community schools, whether they choose to use them or not. Any change in how those funds are to be used should be up to voters and communities not broad legislation.*

*I will close by saying, I get to wake up every morning and go to work in a great school. One that I will continue to work at. Great schools are created by great communities. They are tied together. One cannot exist without the other. Any long lasting improvements in education at large will be done in areas where community and schools are joined. This program looks to and will destroy that connection and with it the lives of far more children in Ohio than it will help. I feel strongly that this body will find a way to fix this before the April 1 deadline.*

*Chairman Jones and members of the House Bill 9 conference committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide input regarding Ohio's EdChoice Voucher program. I am happy to address your questions.*