

## Gerri Kimnach Testimony

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I am speaking up as an opponent of Ed choice and HB9 as it stands today. I am a PTA member and, just like the PTA, support public dollars for public schools.

My husband and I both attended public schools. My father-in-law is a retired public-school teacher. Our three children currently attend Finneytown public schools and are all thriving there.

We choose Finneytown because we love the financial and cultural diversity, we love that our kids go to a community school, and personally we want to see public schools thrive. We could choose to move to a wealthier school district, which, in our opinion, sometimes ends up being like a private school. We have chosen not to because we believe there's value in living in a diverse school district. We could also "choose" private schools. My son took the PSAT 8/9 in the sixth grade and took the ACT this year as a seventh grader. I don't doubt that he could get a scholarship to a private school. However, I have real concerns about what could happen to his values if he attended a school where everybody is just alike and has privilege. I ponder how these segregated private schools help America grow and be united. Would investing our public tax dollars in private schools end up be like the State investing in segregated schools?

On a personal note, I grew up in a rural area where there were virtually no private schools. I had no idea of the impact private schools have on public schools. When I moved to Cincinnati, I saw firsthand that public schools are damaged when parents in our community send their kids to private schools. This choice detracts educationally invested families away from public schools. And while I can appreciate my neighbors' desire to send their children traditionally to the same parochial school they attended, I don't believe this personal choice should be funded by the state.

The reality is that the teachers at public schools are no less competent than those at private schools. The real difference is that many of the families that choose private schools are also families that are invested in education. Of course their children are going to do well in school. Of course the private schools are going to look great when they have the ability to remove difficult students permanently.

I have a friend whose son has attended a private parochial school for the last two years. They are now seriously considering sending him back to public school. Guess what his parents heard from the teachers and staff at the parochial school? Nothing but derogatory statements about our public-school district. This is quite discouraging that a "religious" staff who has the ability to permanently remove poor behaving students has the audacity to put down our hard-working public teachers! It agitates me that you would consider giving this parochial school funding, but you wouldn't make them heed the same rules as our public schools. Couldn't every school have a "great performing" schools if we turned our back on those children who have the most need? Why not instead give more resources to the public schools to really help those kids that don't have the support at home that they need to thrive educationally?

While I respect the amazing right we have as Americans to choose our education, it does not mean that my public dollars should fund somebody else's choice. If I ever decide to choose

private schools for any of my children, I would fully expect that we pay the bill, not the taxpayers.

First, I plead with you to not unconstitutionally require my local tax dollars to pay for private schooling. I did not vote for my local tax dollars to pay for the choice of private school. I voted for it to pay the bills of our public school.

Secondly, I request that if you use my state tax dollars to fund private schools that you would require private schools to have the same standards. If they receive public funding then they should not be allowed to have special entrance for their students or be allowed to remove students permanently from their school for negative behavior. I have heard some people argue in support of Ed Choice by saying that European governments fund their private schools. However, many of those European governments that do fund their private schools also hold their private schools to the same standards as their public schools. If you use my tax dollars to fund private schools then I would ask that that they follow the same rules.

Instead of using my tax dollars for private education and taking money away from my children, and many Ohio children, and their ability to succeed, please consider how you can use our tax dollars to improve public education. If everyone in this room would put their heads together to add funding to public education and find ways to improve public education, then maybe more people would want to choose public schools instead of opting out for private schooling.

Those of you in this room that support Ed choice, I have a very real question for you. Do you realize that if you support public dollars for private schools, then you are admitting your failure, and the failure of other government officials, to make wise choices and funding that help public schools and all students succeed?

If you choose to move forward HB9 as it is, based on school report cards rather than based on personal income, then you will devastate public school for so many students. Please consider changing HB9 to be more like SB89 as a start. However, I plead with you to do much, much more. I plead with you to invest in building public schools that allow every student to succeed.

Thank you for your time today.