

February 14, 2020
Testimony Statement for the Education Committee

Good Morning. My name is Mary Ann Bernier. I am a Regional Director and the Director of Government Programs at the Catholic Schools Office for the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. I have been an educator for 44 years in both the public and non public schools.

After these years of experience as a teacher, principal and central office administrator, I am convinced that the most important thing our state laws should provide to all parents, who are a child's primary educator, is the choice of where their children can be educated. This is because I have experienced first hand the impact that this choice has provided to families and their children.

As a principal of a Catholic School, I witnessed the positive effect my small neighborhood school, which emphasized the education of the whole child, had for dozens of children and their families. What a joy it has been for me and my school staff to watch children, particularly those who would never have been able to access our school program without the Ed Choice Scholarship, flourish and excel in our school setting.

The Ed Choice Scholarship Programs are providing access to school choice for 42,000 families this school year. I am proud to say that the Archdiocese of Cincinnati is serving 10,000 of these students. As I have visited many of our 105 schools over the past four years, it has become very clear to me how important the option of educational choice is for the Ohio families we serve.

Providing an effective school program begins with planning. Our schools began registration in January. The delay in the Traditional Scholarship Program Application is a hardship, not only for the families who want to enroll their children for next year, but for both our schools and the public schools who need to plan for personnel and resources for next school year.

I urge you to keep our state families and their children as the focus of this discussion. Due to their response over the past 14 years, I think that the scholarship program needs to be maintained and even expanded so that more families will be able to access choices for their children in the future. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

Respectfully,

Mary Ann Bernier
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