

Testimony

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Good morning Rep. Jones, Sweeney, and other valued members of the Ohio Assembly.

I am here to assert that all funding used for EdChoice vouchers should come directly from the state, rather than being pulled from already tight public school budgets. I am confident that this committee can work together to create a program that will help meet the needs of all of Ohio's students, without taking opportunities away from the 90% that are enrolled in our public schools.

My name is Morgan Steinbach and I am a second year public school teacher from Plain Local School District. My district is home to over 5,000 students, 9 buildings, and is well known as Stark County's most diverse school district in terms of race/ethnicities and socio-economic status. We have students who come from wealth, and students who come from public housing. We have several students with identified learning, emotional or cognitive disabilities as well as having students identified as gifted in several areas, from Math to the Arts. We have students who have faced trauma that we could never dream of, and some who we might view as having the "picture perfect" life. But, that's supposed to be what public schools are for, right? To be representative of our public? To expose all children to other children from different groups, different experiences? To highlight different talents, abilities and strengths of all students, regardless of income level?

When taxpayer dollars are taken from our local schools, our ability to provide this experience for ALL students to the best of our ability is hugely limited. Without adequate funding, we could lose teachers and programs that educate the whole child in our community. A single child who uses the EdChoice Voucher program K-12 could cost a district almost \$50,000, plus transportation costs that have to be taken on by the local district. This cost is more than the annual net income of a young teacher like myself! The voucher system unfairly forces public school districts, districts with the responsibility to educate ALL kids who walk into our doors, to give funds to private schools. The highly qualified staff in public schools are held to exceptionally high standards by the state while staff in private schools are held to virtually NO academic standard by the state. I fail to see how this shift in funds can guarantee a better educational experience for our communities' students.

The environment created in public schools is one of acceptance, progressiveness and inclusivity. Public schools welcome *all*: There is not an application process. There is no tuition. There is no exclusivity. Private schools offer acceptance to *some*, tuition help for *some*, and acceptance only for *some*. The Ohio Constitution promises citizens a "thorough and efficient system of common schools throughout the state". The system as it stands today breaks this promise. As students leave districts and take funding, those who do not choose to leave or cannot leave, are left with lessened resources, and less access to opportunity due to limited

funding. Increased class sizes, less class options, less access to relevant technology, limited access to mental and emotional health services, and outdated/low quality curriculum are just a few of possible devastating effects that could be a result of an increase in funds taken from public school budgets to be given to private schools.

I urge you to put trust into the public servants who have chosen this profession and to respect Ohio's promise to the vast majority of students who attend public schools. Respect those who educate all students who are put into their classroom seats. Value the work that over 150,000 educators are putting in daily to educate over a million students in schools across the state. Show us you care by allowing us to keep the funding we have, not forcing us to be more resourceful than we already are, all so the minority can take funding that the majority needs. Ohio's future needs you to adequately fund education for all students, not to deduct funds from the schools and districts that need them the most.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Morgan Steinbach