

Chairman Jones and members of the House Bill 9 conference committee, my name is Nicole Marshall. I am a mother to Alyssa, who is a beautiful 3rd grader at Mark Twain Elementary in the Westerville City School District. I am also a taxpayer who votes in every election. In addition to those things, I am also the Treasurer and CFO for the Westerville City School District. I want to thank you for allowing ample opportunity for testimony regarding HB9 and the EdChoice voucher program, including being here today on a holiday.

Please allow me to start by telling you about my beautiful daughter, Alyssa. Alyssa is in 3rd grade at Mark Twain Elementary in Westerville City Schools. Mark Twain is on the EdChoice designated school list for the current school year and will remain on the list for the next school year without changes. Alyssa, with all her spunk, love and creativity, started at Mark Twain her second grade year and was welcomed with open arms. She absolutely loves her school and all of the teachers, the principal, the school counselor, the librarian, the food service workers and the custodian. There has not been a single employee in that school that she has not adored. The PTA recently held a party at Skate Zone 71 for the kids, and their custodian, Mr. Clark, came to support the kids. You would have thought he was an actual rockstar with the reception he received from all of the kids. Mark Twain is not only a safe, warm and loving environment, they are also excellent academically, with 100% of their 3rd graders meeting the 3rd grade reading guarantee. Alyssa, who has been diagnosed with ADHD and had struggled previously, is thriving and scoring above average in all areas thanks to the support the wonderful staff at Mark Twain has put in place for her. Mark Twain Elementary received an overall grade of B on the most recent report card, yet they ended up listed as "failing" with the EdChoice designation. Mark Twain Elementary is not a failing school.

Now let's talk about Westerville City Schools. We are a suburb of Columbus and we educate approximately 15,300 students. We operate one preschool, 15 elementary schools, four middle schools, three high schools, and an academic enrichment center. Our voters just approved a combined 5.9 mill operating levy and a 1.95 mill bond issue on November 5, 2019, that will allow us to add an additional elementary and middle school, increase safety and security throughout the district, and also renovate several of our older buildings.

For FY2019, Westerville City Schools had a state share index of approximately 42%.

Westerville is a growing district. We have had a net gain of approximately 1,300 students since we last opened a new building in 2003 and are projected to grow by another 1,300 students in the next 10 years.

The percentage of economically disadvantaged students in our school buildings range from 12.6% to 67.9%, with an overall district percentage of approximately 35.7%. We serve students from 63 different countries who have 58 different native languages. 14.4% of our students have disabilities and 18.7% of our students have been identified as gifted. As you can see, we are a very diverse district.

During FY2019, the calculated funding from the formula was \$56.5 million for Westerville City Schools. However, even though the district continued to grow, our funding was capped at \$47 million. That was a loss of \$11.5 million to our schools. Our district has been capped since the inception of the current formula in FY2014, even though we have continued to see growing enrollment. Our taxpayers have had to make up these losses, annually. Because of the lack of adequate state funding and continued enrollment growth, we had to go back to the voters last November for a 5.9 mill operating levy. Unless the state makes significant changes to the way districts like ours are funded, we will have to go back to the voters again and again in order to continue the level of programs and services we offer.

According to the District Profile Report (aka Cupp Report), our district spends \$893 per pupil less than the state average and \$997 per pupil less than those districts classified as similar districts by ODE. We consistently spend less per pupil than that of the state average and the districts classified as similar.

We received approximately \$3,000 per pupil in state foundation funding during FY2019, which is \$750 less per pupil than what we would have received if we had been fully funded. Another way to look at it is that we did not receive any state funding for approximately 3,000 of our 15,300 students (emphasis added). The most recent biennium budget, HB166, essentially froze the district's general fund revenue at the FY2019 underfunded levels.

In addition to being underfunded by the state, our district loses \$4 million on an annual basis to charter schools, over and above the state funding received.

Without a change to the EdChoice program we are looking at having at least another \$1.2 million taken away from the students we serve. This deduction would be for students that we have never educated and have never received any state funding for. This is in addition to the approximately \$4 million for charter schools. This is in addition to the already underfunded amounts of \$11.5 million the district loses to the funding formula.

We are not opposed to school choice in Westerville City Schools. What we are opposed to is the syphoning out of public tax dollars that are being sent to private schools.

Because we expend public tax dollars, we are held accountable. Do you want to know how much I make as the Treasurer/CFO? You can look it up on the State Treasurer's website. Do you want to know how much our rockstar custodian, Mr. Clark, makes or maybe your child's teacher? You can look those up too. Do you want to compare us to all other districts? The district profile report (Cupp) is available on the Ohio Department of Education's website. You can request virtually any record we keep and we have to provide it to you "promptly".

Our governing board members are elected by our community. If more than two of them decide to have a conversation about anything school related, then we have to call a board meeting,

publish notice to our community and keep it open for anyone to attend. Every single penny we spend must be for a PROPER PUBLIC PURPOSE (emphasis added).

We enjoy the company of our auditors for six months out of the year to ensure that we are accountable for every single penny of the public dollars we receive. Even better, if we pay a teacher that is not licensed, we are issued a finding for recovery for the public money illegally expended for that teacher. Private school teachers are not even required to have a license.

I am confused why private schools, who will receive \$345 million this year from our public school districts through scholarships, are not held to the same standards? I do not understand why our state would allow the EdChoice deduction to increase by over \$40 million in one year, especially when there is zero accountability for these public dollars.

As a mother, a taxpayer, a voter and a Treasurer/CFO, I am here today to urge you to not take any money away from our public schools. If you do continue to provide state (emphasis added) money to private schools, then at the very least, hold them accountable. Our voters pass our levies for Westerville City Schools, the ballot language is very clear in that the money will go to Westerville City Schools. The amount of money our district will lose if nothing is done for EdChoice is 100% money from our locally, voter-approved levies. The argument that taxpayers should control the money they pay to schools is absolutely true. Taxpayers do have control over our schools through voted levies and electing their local school boards. Our community has already spoken on this matter and that money should stay with the Westerville City School District.

Chairman Jones and members of the House Bill 9 Conference Committee, thank you for your time and for listening to my testimony. I'm happy to answer any questions you have.