



ARCHBISHOP  
**MCNICHOLAS**

THAT YOUTH MAY ATTAIN FULL STATURE IN CHRIST

January 14, 2020

Dear Members of the Ohio General Assembly,

Archbishop McNicholas is a co-ed Catholic school of 500 students in Cincinnati. Enrollment has declined from 651 in 2015. A significant portion of the decline comes from families deciding that they cannot afford tuition.

EdChoice Scholarships have made enrollment at McNicholas possible for students who otherwise would not be able to attend. The cost to educate a student is more than \$12,000, with tuition at \$11,395 for 2020-21. McNicholas provides tuition assistance, but school resources can stretch to only 50% of family demonstrated financial need. According to EdChoice regulations, McNicholas writes off \$5395 for EdChoice Scholarship students whose families are below 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines. Thanks to the generosity of benefactors, the school has been able to absorb the write-offs, but the write-offs reduce the tuition assistance available for struggling middle class families.

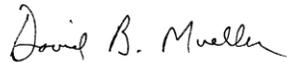
Any changes from EdChoice legislation in place before January 30, 2020 that apply to the 2020-21 school year will be highly disruptive to families and to McNicholas. Both relied on the law as it was before January 31, 2020 to plan for the 2020-21 school year. By the time the General Assembly enacted legislation on January 31, families and the school had already made decisions for 2020-21 according to their longstanding annual timelines. Members of the McNicholas Class of 2024 registered and paid tuition on January 29 according to standing Archdiocesan policy. Registered families eligible for EdChoice based on legislation prior to January 31 have informed McNicholas that they will not be able to attend if they are no longer eligible for an EdChoice Scholarship. McNicholas made decisions about admissions and tuition assistance in December and sent offer letters to families on January 15. Based on an analysis of student eligibility for EdChoice Scholarships, McNicholas, instead of offering tuition assistance at 50% of demonstrated need, stretched to offering it at 80% of demonstrated need to ease the shortfall for families. If the number of EdChoice eligible students is reduced from what it was on January 30, McNicholas will be financially overextended by about \$100,000. In sum, the decision of January 31 came after the critical annual decision dates for Cincinnati Catholic high school families and Catholic high schools. Because of this fact, I urge the General Assembly not to make any changes in EdChoice Scholarships that affect the 2020-21 school year. At the same

time, I urge the General Assembly to make final decisions for 2020-21 very soon. It is time for schools to hire teachers, and the number of teachers depends on enrollment, and enrollment depends on eligibility for EdChoice.

I understand that it is appropriate for the General Assembly to review and update EdChoice legislation, and for the reasons noted above, I believe that no updates should take effect until after the 2020-21 school year. I urge the General Assembly to include among updates a significant increase in the income guidelines for EdChoice Expansion Scholarships. The accompanying spreadsheet of financial profiles of McNicholas families for the 2020-21 school year shows that there is a pressing need for assistance for families in the lower middle class.

Thank you for considering the facts and reasoning I have presented. We at McNicholas High School are grateful for your work. We are grateful too for state funding for our students through Auxiliary Services and Administrative Cost Reimbursement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David B. Mueller".

David B. Mueller  
Principal