

Good Evening. My name is Angela Dittman. I am currently in my 20th year teaching in a public school. I am here to speak in favor of SB 89 as passed by the House.

Currently, EdChoice eligibility is based on a flawed report card system. In my district we have a school that is on the voucher list as a “failing school”, that is also being recognized by the state for earning all A’s on the state report card. This just doesn’t make sense to me.

The way EdChoice is currently funded says that one private school student is worth more in state funding than 2-3 other students combined. I don’t understand how anyone can think the way to fix a struggling school is to take away it’s funding and resources. If the state wishes to fund private schools with public money, then I suggest the state pay for this to happen. Taking local dollars from an already unconstitutional funding system is absurd. By taking local funds from these schools we are increasing the size of each class, giving the teacher less time to spend with every child. Less time to differentiate the instruction being presented to the students. Less time to get to know and truly understand the student and where they are coming from. We are also taking money from these schools, which takes away from the services they are able to offer.

With our current report card, what makes a school a failing school? I truly don’t understand how this works, neither do our parents and community partners. How is it possible that a K-3 school is rated failing when they have a 90% passage rate on the 3rd grade state test? And how is it decided that a private school is not failing? They don’t have a state report card. Studies have shown that many of the EdChoice schools actually perform worse on the state test than the “failing” public school.

What happens when a voucher school isn’t able to help a struggling student? Currently, my district takes in the kids that the private schools can’t control. Students with behavior problems, students on the spectrum, students that have lived through trauma. So, a student attends a voucher school, takes away state funding from the district (2 to 3 times what we receive per student), then the student gets kicked out, because the private schools aren’t trained and equipped with the knowledge to know how to deal with these issues. Where does the kid go? Back to the public school, where classrooms are now overloaded and the kid feels more rejected and therefore, his/her behavior is now escalated? A school that has had funds drained year after year, to failing charter schools, and therefore has had teachers, aides, resources, and professional development cut?

Where is the evidence that Ohio’s current voucher system has improved the level of education students are receiving? I haven’t seen any evidence that would even suggest this to be true. The students that have left our buildings to receive a better education, inevitably come back. Not only do they come back to our school, but they come back further behind and with stories of doing absolutely nothing at the voucher school they attended. Without evidence of an improved student performance, why are we even considering the expansion of the voucher program?

Please support SB 89 as passed by the House. It’s time to stop basing “choice” on broken metrics. If the state is going to have a voucher program, the state should pay the freight--not my community and my students.

Thank you for your time.