



Toledo Public Schools
Board of Education
Educational Campus
1609 N. Summit Street • Toledo, Ohio 43604

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Chairman Jones and members of the Conference Committee, thank you for taking the time to listen to my testimony.

I am Christine Varwig, proud board member of Toledo Public Schools, graduate of TPS, and Mom of a TPS graduate who now works for the district in special education.

I am a believer of school choice; I believe public schools offer an abundance of school choice and taxpayer dollars should fund those public-school choices. Over the last 6 years that I've been on the board of education, we've lost \$70,372,335 to Ed Choice. You've heard from two of my fellow board members on your Marathon Monday session, Stephanie Eichenberg and Sheena Barnes about statistics and inequitable services. Tomorrow you will hear from the Toledo Public Schools Superintendent and Treasurer. Today, I'd like to share student stories, but I'll leave out names to protect the innocent and the not so innocent.

- A student who utilized an Ed Choice voucher his 9th & 10th grade years was kicked out of the Ed Choice private school his sophomore year for stealing food from the lunch line...it was his first offense. He comes from a rough family situation, Dad has been incarcerated many times, his brother currently serving a long stretch. This young man came to Toledo Public Schools and needed some TLC and we welcomed him with open arms because that's what we do. His life was turned around. He graduated from TPS with honors and a top athlete. He credits the (YMOE) Young Men Of Excellence program and others at his public high school for his change. He graduated from Ohio Northern University with honors, and he is currently enrolled in Law School with the goal to be a judge and bridge the gap between the judicial system and the black community. This young man is certainly not a failure.
- Another student in TPS could have graduated last year if the private high school would have released the transcripts, but the student is four credits short of graduating.
- A senior is missing a transcript from his entire freshman year from a local private school because his family owes approximately \$7500. His counselor has moved him into our new credit recovery program, but the student is very discouraged and knows that his family cannot afford the bill and is considering dropping out of high school. The counselor, as well as many other educators in the building, are trying to rally behind him and support him staying in school.



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- Two TPS students that utilized Ed Choice owed between \$1000-\$2000 to two different private schools and couldn't get their transcripts released from those private schools because of the money their families still owed. A local entrepreneur donated dollars to pay the tuition so the students could graduate. So, now we in public education are having to find donors to cover private school tuition due to Ed Choice to help our students.
- We currently have 12 seniors who have missing transcripts due to fees/fines. 8 of those students owe fees/fines to local private schools. 6 of those students owe to just one of the private schools in town with a total of approximately \$40,000. The private school would only give us the total amount not how much each student owes. If those 12 students with transcript holds were to graduate (assuming successful completion of current courses of course) our projected grad rate would increase by almost 1%. Seems small but we know every student counts.
- These are but a few stories.....ed choice may seem like a good thing for some, but really doesn't offer greener pastures, stories like these speak to the private school interest in money rather than the student.

I recently met with a group of our SMARTS students, our student voice initiative, and they asked a multitude of questions on public education including Ed Choice. They could not understand why our state chose to take public funds from their education and give it to private schools instead. I would certainly welcome any of you to visit our schools, listen to our students, and answer their questions.

In closing, I'm not sure if I can pinpoint when our state chose to officially take the proverbial stick to public education, but it needs to stop. Students in my community aren't failures, our teachers and staff aren't failures, and neither is our district; but the state deems them so. Our community must think we're doing something right as we've passed the last 2 levies at 70%. Even our Chamber and business community supports TPS and wonders why the state hasn't fixed the report card and school funding as both have had an economic impact on our city. My recommendation to the legislature.... Blow up the report card, fix school funding, stop ADCs, get rid of high stakes testing, and keep public tax dollars for public schools.

Thank you for your time, I do appreciate your efforts.