

Testimony for HB 9 Conference Committee

February 17, 2020

By: Elizabeth Misson, Parent (Avon Lake City Schools District)

Dear Chairman Jones and members of the House Bill 9 Conference Committee,

Thank you for taking the time to read my concerns.

I understand that the purpose of the EdChoice program is to give parents options when it comes to finding suitable education choices for their children – and I applaud that notion. Every parent should have the ability to send their child to a place where they are confident their child will succeed, regardless of their income level.

However, I have to say, I'm not certain how taking money from public school districts to fund this measure is the best long-term solution.

I'm going to use my personal history as an example:

I grew up attending school in the Garfield Heights City School District. A district that was rated EFFECTIVE by the Ohio state report card system when I attended school there decades ago.

Today, the ranking for this district does not look the same -charting a district grade of 'D' and grades of "F" for achievement and preparing for success.

I know the state report card algorithm criteria changes (often) over time, and this could be part of the case here, but it's no secret income levels and population has declined in Garfield Heights *significantly* over the past twenty years or so.

For the most part, the same people are running the district today, and many of them are the same teachers, from 20 years ago, in what was once an 'effective' district – I have sincere doubts that this district is 'failing' because they decided to wake up one morning and stop trying.

So if our answer is to declare these districts as 'failing' and re-purpose their money for parents to send their kids elsewhere – who is this really helping? Now you have a district who already is struggling because of diminishing household income, and diminishing property value (because of state law, they have to rely on those property taxes for money to operate), and what are they forced to do? Put up another levy – one that the residents can't afford, and the cycle continues. I suspect this is a scenario playing out in many middle-income districts across the state.

How long are we going to "rob Peter to pay Paul" before we realize it's not helping anyone?

I don't have the answers for how we tackle the bigger issue – community apathy when it comes to recognizing education as a shared responsibility.

And I don't blame parents for wanting to send their kids to a different school if their current situation is not working for them, but why can't we come up with a solution that helps these families, without hurting the public districts and the families that send their children to public schools?

Thank you,

-Elizabeth Misson