



Badin High School
571 New London Rd. | Hamilton, OH 45013 | 513.863.3993 | BadinHS.org

THINK ACHIEVE SERVE LEAD

HB9 Conference Committee

February 19, 2020

Testimony of Patrick Keating, Assistant Principal of Stephen T. Badin High School, Hamilton, OH.

Chairman Jones and members of the House Bill 9 Conference Committee, thank you for granting me the opportunity to speak with you all today regarding the EdChoice Scholarship Program and its impact on our school community. My name is Patrick Keating and I serve as an Assistant Principal at Stephen T. Badin High School in Hamilton, OH. Badin High School is a Catholic, co-ed 9-12 school that is home to 622 students. As the only Catholic high school in Butler County, we serve students from 43 different grade schools and junior high schools and students from 22 zip codes.

Catholic by its very definition means universal, accepting, all embracing. We believe in meeting students where they are and serving all students from all backgrounds. We strive to walk alongside each of these students throughout their faith and academic journeys. We believe and strive for these things because of our Catholic faith.

One of the misconceptions that has emerged in our community and beyond is that students who attend Badin and other Catholic schools are wealthy and can easily afford to do so. Hamilton is a working class city. As are our neighboring cities and communities. It is a significant financial sacrifice that parents choose to make in sending their sons and daughters to Catholic schools. Badin High School has constantly worked to make funds available to help these families as they choose to have their students enroll in a faith based school. Just this past school year, Badin distributed nearly \$400,000 in need-based funds to help families afford a Catholic education. This only covered 50% of the calculated need for the families that applied to Badin High School. This money is only possible through our generous donors, the work of Badin's Office of Institutional Advancement through the annual fund, and the general operations budget of Badin High School. We have worked diligently to maintain the lowest tuition possible and we have one of the lowest high school tuitions of all Catholic schools in the Cincinnati area. Badin High School firmly believes that all students deserve a fair and meaningful education inspired by the Gospel and we have continued to work to remove any financial barrier that may prevent a student from attending our school. That is often not enough to ensure that all who desire to attend Badin are given the opportunity to do so.

In the spring of 2019, Badin made the conscious decision to begin accepting the EdChoice scholarship. This decision was made because our faith calls us to do: to serve all students and to meet them where they are. Immediately, we saw a number of students from within our school community make the decision to attend Badin High School. Their reasons may have been different but their path was the same: they were able to attend our school because of this scholarship.

For one of these students, she utilized the scholarship because she did not feel physically safe in her school. Every day was a challenge for her as she reported that she felt that she was in danger. Another was bullied constantly and wanted a fresh start in a Christian environment. Each of these students decided to utilize the scholarship for different reasons - but this scholarship allowed them to make the conscious choice on where they attended school.



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Family income nor a zip code should determine where a student attends school. As Catholics, we believe that parents are the primary educators of their children, and therefore parental choice in education is a fundamental right. Just two weeks ago I had the pleasure of standing before over 130 families as they officially registered for next school year at Badin High School. While seeing their smiling faces brought me immense joy, I could not help but think of the faces missing from the crowd on that night. In the days leading up to our freshman registration night, we had a number of families call and express that they would not be able to register yet because of the uncertainty in the continuation of EdChoice. They wanted to be there on that night of celebration and excitement and we wanted them there as well. One family in particular called and said that they did not want to see their child's excitement turn to sadness and anger if the scholarship program came to an abrupt end. Many other families expressed a similar sentiment. As a teacher, school leader and community member, hearing this was heartbreaking. No student nor family should be denied a choice in where they attend school.

As the debate over this scholarship program has grown, I have heard so many say that state money should not be given to a faith-based institution. As you all know, the US Supreme Court affirmed the right of parents and guardians to use vouchers to choose the best environment for children regardless of school type in the 2002 case of *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris*. The success and growth of the Cleveland Scholarship and EdChoice shows that families in Ohio believe that they should have that choice in where their sons and daughters attend school.

I implore each one of you, as well as your colleagues in the House and Senate, to protect this right of each and every family within our great state. As a former government teacher, I taught my students that governing was not always about following the voices of the loudest but about doing what was right and what was just. All students deserve a choice in the type of education they receive – please continue to give them that choice by continuing this scholarship program as it was initially designed.

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