

Chairman and members of the House Bill 9 Conference Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today regarding Ohio's EdChoice Voucher program. I am Mark Paxton, High School Science teacher with Northern Local Schools in Perry County.

As I come here today reflecting on my own education and 28+ years in the teaching profession, I have the unique situation of comparing both a public school education and a private school education. I attended a private, catholic middle school and a public high school, which happens to be the same high school that I currently teach at. I attended the private school for religious reasons and the public high school due to the fact that 99% of the students did the same.

Looking back at my education, I feel that I was somewhat behind my public school peers entering high school. My private school education was solely based on religious reason for attending. Having two children of my own, I had the opportunity to have my children attend the same private K-8 school which I attended at no cost to me, private funding was offered. Both my children attend public schools and I feel are far better of educationally for it.

In my 28+ years as a high school teacher, I see students coming from private schools to attend our public school due to the simple fact that their parents feel that they are getting a better education. How can we take funding away from a public school that is held to different standards yet providing an education that many parents feel is a better education, yet the state says it is failing our kids. Are the schools failing or is this a failing system?

For us to right this failing system we must have accountability for schools, I am not in disagreement on that, what I am in disagreement with is the broken system that Ohio schools are functioning under. If vouchers are going to be issued by the state, then the state should fund them not school districts.

In closing I would like to say that the failed school system has failed our students not the schools themselves. Let's put accountability where it needs to be and that is in a system that works for our students. Thank you chairman and members for allowing me the opportunity to address you regarding Ohio's EdChoice Voucher program.