

Good Afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

My name is Mary Beth Headman and I am a 4th grade teacher in Sylvania Public Schools. I have been teaching in the public school system for 11 years. Prior to that, I was a corporate attorney, licensed in Ohio and Illinois. While it may sound cliché, I chose to switch careers because I wanted to do something where I could directly influence children. I am here today to do just that. My testimony today is being done to advocate for my students in Sylvania Public Schools.

Currently, I teach at an EdChoice school. Whiteford Elementary School is a school of 310 students where 31.7% are eligible for free and reduced lunches. 35 Students are officially provided ESL services at our school and out of our entire population, 50 students do not speak English at home. Last year our school received a grade of "A" in Gap Closing measures yet we are considered Ed Choice because of our K-3 literacy grade.

My school is not a failing school. If you were to come to my school, and yes I would be happy to have you visit, I would encourage you to visit, you would see all of the remarkable things that our school is doing. That our "failed" school is doing. You would see the special needs students manning the "Treat Trolley" as a way of learning responsibility. You would see the looks on the children's faces when we have our annual penny drive to buy a goat for a 3rd world country. You would see students who are going through very tough home situations coming to a building where they are loved by the administration, staff and teachers. You would also meet Syrian Refugees, foster kids, gifted kids and students who are so economically disadvantaged that they cannot even pay the \$6.50 for a subscription to Scholastic News. These students need all of the help that the state can give them. Taking money directly from our district based on a failed state report card system, and funding private and parochial students is not the way to fund a voucher system.

Ironically, the schools which are receiving EdChoice money don't have a state report card. Their students do not have to take our state tests and their teachers are not evaluated like teachers in public schools. Basically, the state is giving money to schools with no way of knowing if the those schools are successfully teaching the students.

I strongly believe that if you were to ask a parent who is taking EdChoice voucher money, they would agree that the money to fund vouchers should not come at the expense of other students. That is what is happening with the current system. That is what needs to change.

Currently, the state gives Sylvania Public Schools \$2076 per student to educate them for the school year. When a family chooses to receive Ed Choice money, that family takes \$4650/\$6000 from our district. I don't understand that at all. For every one child that takes a voucher, the state takes over 2 times the amount allocated to our students and gives it to the parochial or private school. As a taxpayer, I think that is totally wrong. And, on top of the voucher money, we still have to fund busses and counselors.

As a voting taxpayer, it would seem logical to me that if you are going to have a voucher system, it should be based on income eligibility. It should not come out of public school funding. Ninety percent of students in Ohio go to public schools. The state needs to ensure that our public education is adequately serving the majority of students in our state.

I urge you on behalf of myself, my students and all public education students to please make the necessary changes to the current EdChoice system.

In order to do this:

- 1- Do not take money from local public schools to fund parochial and private schools.
- 2- Do not continue with the current report card system in Ohio.
- 3- Do not continue to provide a system where “choice” is given to a few at the expense of many.
- 4- Create a policy where Ed Choice vouchers are based on income eligibility.
- 5- Create a policy which is not based on test scores. If the system is based on test scores, require any and all schools that receive state money, whether public or private, to have to adhere to those testing requirements.

All of these changes are reflected in SB89. I urge you to do the right thing for all students and to adopt the changes reflected in SB89.

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. Thank you for allowing me to advocate for my students and for all public education students.