



February 18, 2020

Distinguished members of the House and Senate,

My name is Matt Sableski and I am the Principal at Carroll High School, a Catholic school near Dayton, OH. My school is made up of 750 students from a variety of school districts including the low-performing, inner-city district of Dayton Public Schools, the high achieving suburb of Oakwood and many places in between. Our students are diverse in race, culture, faith, academic ability and most certainly socio-economic status. Because of the EdChoice Scholarship program over the last twelve years, Carroll has been able to serve this wonderful group of families who represent our larger society, and educate them in the Catholic faith, the arts and rigorous academics. Our school provides additional opportunities in 46 extracurricular activities, service groups and athletic teams in 22 varsity sports.

I am here today to urge you to maintain an EdChoice program that allows all families who want a choice in where and how to educate their children, to truly have that choice. Private schools have played a key role in our society for hundreds of years and the contributions of our citizens who attended these schools are too numerous to count. However, the rising costs of education have made affording private and parochial schools difficult for even middle-class families and no matter how much we tighten our belts, we can only keep costs so low. The reality is, school choice is quickly becoming something for the upper-middle class and the wealthy.

I would urge you to consider the following:

An income-based program with a higher threshold is a value investment in future. For the reasons stated above, the proposed Buckeye Opportunity Scholarship program simply doesn't help enough families at 250% of the poverty limit. An average parochial high school costs at least \$10,000 per year even on the tightest of budgets. That is simply not affordable for families who are above 250% of the poverty limit but below 400 – 450% of that limit. Parochial school tuition is covered in large part by hard-working, tax-paying families that are already fully vested in their local public school district by virtue of paying their annual property tax outlay. An income-based program that prorated the scholarship (\$6,000 at 250%, \$5,000 at 300%, \$4,000 at 400% for example) would not only be a way to enhance opportunity for these families but also provide a true value to the State as a whole. The remainder of the cost to educate a student outside of their public district would still be covered by parents, and philanthropy. The State of Ohio's INVESTMENT through this scholarship of anywhere from \$4,000-\$6,000 would mean that student does not cost the traditional total annual amount of \$11,000 to the tax payers of the State. These families still FAITHFULLY support their local public schools, and provide for an education that they deem best for their children.

Low performing schools must stay on the eligible list. No matter how you measure school success, there are still schools that we know are not providing the quality of education a family should expect. As a society we should all work to ensure good public schools. However, in cases where the schools have a history of inadequate performance, often for years before the EdChoice program even existed, families should have more options to choose a school that meets their students' needs beyond moving to a different city with a better school district. That is not good for students, it's not good for families and it's not good for cities. Long term, it's not good for the State of Ohio.

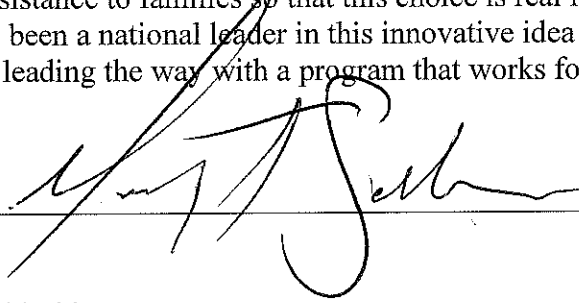
Consider the case of Gabriella, who is a gifted student with a passion for Science and Mathematics. Her drive and aspirations should result in her pursuing higher education and ultimately a career here in Ohio as an Engineer or Computer Programmer. Gabriella's family lives in Dayton, where not one single open enrollment public high school scores higher than an F on the most recent Ohio Department of Education Report Card and also each fall in the bottom quartile of schools state-wide on the Performance Index Rankings. Additionally, there are sparse offerings of active programs supporting the Ohio Science Day nor do any have advanced applied STEM programs like TEAMS (Tests of Engineering and Math Skills) or iGEM (International Genetically Engineered Machine). For Gabriella's family, their only CHOICE is private school which is tough to afford for any family of six or move into a school district that has more offerings. Because of the EdChoice Scholarship, Gabriella is able to attend Carroll High School and fulfill her dream of attending the Ohio State University and studying Biomedical Engineering. Her family was able to stay in their home and the city of Dayton retained a great family that otherwise would have left for the suburbs.

Negative impact will be far greater on private and parochial schools than public districts. Many public school superintendents around the state have led families in their districts to believe that the EdChoice program will be devastating to their districts. However, the program has proven to be far less impactful than the open enrollment policies that many districts employ. For example, Mad River Local Schools reported in an email to their families that they would lose approximately, \$300,000 per year as a result of the EdChoice program. That represents less than 1% of their annual budget. Conversely, loss of revenue from the EdChoice program would cost my school roughly \$1.8 million per year which is roughly 35% of our total budget. Losing that revenue would dramatically reshape my school and parochial schools all over the state of Ohio. Schools would close, teachers would lose jobs and students would be placed into public schools. I would speculate that public districts would have difficulty accommodating the influx of new students who have never been in their schools.

It should be noted that Mad River is one of many public school districts that has open-enrollment; and revenue they generate from the open enrollment program exceeds \$4.5 million dollars per year. (Source: Mad River School District website: <https://www.madriverschools.org/cms/lib/OH01914812/Centricity/Domain/20/MadRiver-048702.pdf>). It seems hypocritical for public school districts to encourage school choice in the form of open enrollment students and their \$6,000, but scoff at the notion of school choice for private schools even though all citizens of Ohio pay taxes.

In conclusion, private and parochial schools are as important to the fabric of our culture as public schools. Families have a right to make the best choice for their child's education. Providing financial assistance to families so that this choice is real is a good and noble purpose. The state of Ohio has been a national leader in this innovative idea for the last twelve years and I urge you to continue leading the way with a program that works for ALL who seek an educational choice!

Signed: _____

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matthew Sableski', written over a horizontal line.

Matthew Sableski
Principal
Carroll High School