

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

Thank you for the opportunity to share with you my written testimony in support of EdChoice Scholarships and for legislation to remain unchanged as it was voted into law years ago by the same body of government that is now looking to make major changes.

In November 2019, when ODE released the list of EdChoice eligible buildings for the 2020-2021 school year, I found our local high school, Riverside High School, on the list. Interested in understanding why, I began researching the state report card, the criteria involved, and how Riverside fared. I found that Riverside High School received an overall grade of D for the 2018-2019 school year meeting criteria *No. 1 -Performance* on the Criteria for EdChoice Designated Public Schools document available on ODE's website. Most often the criteria listed first is the most important as I believe is the case here.

Whether or not you agree with the state report card, all public school districts in the state of Ohio are assessed based on the same criteria. They know the expectations and repercussions if they do not meet the criteria. Students are also assessed each day by their teachers. Each school, private or public, has the option to create their own grading scale. Is 90% an A- or B+? If I do not like the grading scale my student is held accountable to, I simply can't call the school and have them change it. My student was made aware of the grading scale and will be held accountable to it, like it or not. School districts are aware of the criteria on the state report card and need to be held accountable to it, like it or not.

In my research on EdChoice scholarships, I found that EdChoice designated public schools were typically located in inner-city or low-income neighborhoods. When the new list was released in November of 2019, and it contained buildings in the middle or upper-class districts, school districts began to speak up. Why weren't they speaking up before? Did they not care about the low-income districts, even the one directly adjoined to Riverside that has been a designated EdChoice district since the beginning? A district that has all 6 buildings on the list and loses students to EdChoice Scholarships or open-enrollment each year.

Speaking of open enrollment, how is this different from EdChoice? Are you aware that one of the public school administrators fighting to drastically change EdChoice has two children that for years attended a Parochial school? When she felt that school was not meeting their needs, she *chose* to withdraw them and instead of enrolling them in her home district (Riverside Local Schools) open enrolled them in a neighboring district. She *chose* to send her students and tax dollars to her school of *choice* but is advocating to take that *choice* away from thousands of students.

What is it going to take to keep EdChoice intact as the law currently stands? What testimony in person or in writing is going to convince you that the proposed changes and the delay in enrollment are hurting thousands of students and their families? Please *choose* to give us a *choice*. #SchoolChoice

Thank you for your time.

Melissa Brugh