

To the State Primary&Secondary Education Committee:

I am writing this testimony in support of the EdChoice program. To give you a little background of where I am coming from, I have twenty-two years in education. I am currently a principal of a PK-8 Catholic School in Lima, Ohio. I have previously been a teacher, school counselor, and administrator in both private and public school settings, including career technical education. My experiences have allowed me to observe the varying needs of Ohio's students at all ages. Because of these experiences, I believe that school choice is of utmost importance. The students that we serve in both in the public and private setting do not all have the same learning and social emotional needs. I appreciate parents who are seeking the best option for success for their children, something we should all be looking for.

I have been watching the hearings on the Ohio Channel and reading articles across the state. It seems to me that two common threads of concern continue to be evident. First, the school funding model is broken and unconstitutional. And second, that the public report card system is flawed. These are not new issues. They have been in question for many years. I would not disagree that some time and effort needs to be put into correcting these issues, but now at the 11th hour, is not the time to make these changes. These changes need to be carefully thought out. They need to include educators from the field who work in the schools every single day. I think that all educators would attest that a one day snapshot of a test does not tell us everything the students know and how students think and learn.

With that being said, I feel like EdChoice is a separate issue and I am urging you to consider freezing the program and sticking to the list that we have been using during the safe harbor phase. This would allow a couple of things to happen. One, all schools can proceed with their budgets and planning for the upcoming school year in the same manner that we have been. Two, this would keep current families eligible for the scholarship and would also give schools time to plan for changes that could occur moving forward. And three, it would give legislators and the department of education a more reasonable amount of time to resolve the issues at hand and to not make quick, irrational decisions.

Another concern I have is the lack of knowledge that the public schools have in regards to accountability measures and requirements that private schools have in regards to testing. Our school currently has 78% of our students receiving EdChoice scholarships (Traditional and Expansion). The state of Ohio mandates that if your school receives over 65% EdChoice scholarships that all students are required to participate in state testing. Our students have been doing this for several years. In addition to taking state tests, we also take our required diocesan tests, which is the NWEA Map test (Ohio approved assessment for the Third Grade Reading Guarantee). So, we may not have a grade card, but we do have accountability measures that we must adhere to.

Finally, I can say that in my experience leading in a private school, I have observed students excel and flourish that have come to us from other schools. Some of these students are students that have started here in our preschool, while others have come to us from other public and private schools. Parents appreciate the small class sizes, special attention their students receive, open communication, a loving, caring and dedicated staff, and safe place that teaches morals and values. I can honestly say that I have never worked with a more genuine staff who cares about the children they serve. They come to school before they are required to work with students and meet with parents. Many of them work into the evening hours as well to make sure

student needs are met. Without the scholarship, these students' lives will be turned upside down.

I appreciate your openness and willingness to listen to educators across the state during this time of change. Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions that you might have. I can be reached at 419.303.6422.

Sincerely,

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