

Chairman Jones and members of House Bill 9 Conference Committee, I want to thank all of you for the opportunity to testify today regarding Ohio's Ed Choice Voucher Program. My name is Richard Seas, Superintendent of the Adams County Ohio Valley School District. The disclaimer to my testimony is that these are my thoughts and not necessarily the views of the Adams County School Board. Simply put, "As Rich Seas It".

Upon reviewing much of the testimony that has already been given, researching the history of the voucher program, and noting the Ed Choice issue as it stands in Ohio at this time, I thought I would begin by reminding all of us that there is a place for Ed Choice (i.e. private and public education). How do I know? I've lived it. You see, as a young man my parents sent my three sisters and I to a Catholic school. Why? My parents were my #1 educator and therefore exercised their right to pay tuition and send us to a Catholic school. The tuition payments were not easy as growing up we did not have much money. My father then took a job, requiring the family to move, and locate in St. Mary's, Ohio where there was no Catholic high school. I then attended a public university, received my teaching degree, taught science at both public and parochial schools. I received my Educational Specialist degree from a private university. Finally, I have served as an administrator in the public system whereby I was Superintendent of Coldwater EVSD for 12 years and now Superintendent of the Adams County Ohio Valley School District for 5 years. Why do I highlight some of my education and career activities for you? Because I have had the opportunity to see the good, bad, and ugly of both private and public education.

My experience teaching at the Catholic school, interestingly enough, reunited me with the nun who I had for 2nd and 5th grade while attending St. Teresa Catholic School in Springfield, Ohio. Now, however, I was a teacher at St. Charles Borromeo, located in Kettering, Ohio. Overall, students were great and the parents were very supportive. Behavior problems? If a student's misbehavior was frequent and/or severe, the student would likely be removed from the school and often sent to the public school of the parents' residence. In contrast, my first teaching assignment in a public school provided a mixed bag of well-behaved and misbehaved students with both supportive and non-supportive parents. Behavior problems? Students could not be kicked out of school and sent to the public school of their parents' residence. The public school was their parents' school of residence.

The point that I'm hoping to make is that I see great benefits in both private education and public education. Looking at both sides, as the Conference Committee is doing, helps give you a similar perspective that I've lived and hopefully, you will note the differences between public and private education.

Funding? If I understand the decision of the DeRolph Case, the Ohio Supreme Court said that Ohio's funding of schools is unconstitutional. Assuming the current system of funding schools is unconstitutional, I struggle understanding why Ohio legislators would consider taking more dollars from public schools while continuing to standardize and regulate public education. In my opinion, the standardization of education in Ohio was doomed for failure from the beginning. What was a school/community going to do when a large number of students didn't meet the standard? For example, nobody, including politicians, were willing to stand by and watch seniors

in public high schools not graduate because they couldn't meet the requirements (standard) and receive 18/35 points to graduate from high school. Accommodations were made and the students graduated from high school. Likewise, and as already noted in other testimonies given before the Committee, the Ohio Report Card is flawed, lacks integrity, and surely can't be used to determine voucher eligibility.

I hope we can all agree that parents are the #1 educators of their children. If so, note the following statements:

A private school with supportive parents equals a good school.

A public school with supportive parents equals a good school.

Thus, whether or not the school is private or public, supportive parents make a good school.

Imagine a student who lacks parenting, is raised in poverty, and attends a public school. I can tell you from living in Adams County, the poorest county in Ohio with a median income of \$36,000.00, support for our public schools is needed. Interestingly enough, additional support for our public schools comes from the staff, the unselfish people of Adams County, and the local churches. Private businesses and churches partner with the public schools to help meet the many needs of our students. If the powers to be want to use public money to support and fund private schools, then be transparent, honest, and accountable with the money you are taking from the public to give to private schools.

As noted earlier, my education began in a Catholic school. I thank the nuns and priests for my education and faith. Likewise, I thank the many public school teachers and coaches who educated me, believed in me, and helped me get to college. Public education and private education should be celebrated. The fight isn't between public schools and private schools. Both systems have work to do. The real fight comes down to whether or not legislators can see the benefit of public and private education and support them accordingly. I like private education and I like public education. I also like the House plan because it is an income-based approach that doesn't take the necessary funds away from public schools and the work that is being done.

Chairman Jones and members of the House Bill 9 Conference Committee, thank you for your time and dedication to public service. Any questions for me?