

2/20/2019

Testimony : Mirna Funkhouser

Representative and Committee members, thank you for allowing me to speak on behalf of the children tonight.

I have listened to over 20 hours of testimony and read all the 2019 budgets and everything online, and I have had to have talks about KIDS FIRST to many schools who refuse 504 or IEP plans to children with a medical disability. I have listened to hours of testimony and people denigrating each other, and that must stop.

This is about the children and the best education environment they can have.

So here is my story and many others mirror this in this great state. I am a single mother of 3 boys. At the time of enrollment into the Catholic school system I was married, we had 2 incomes. I owned a business with offices in Sandusky, Cleveland and Blue Ash and Mason. In 2007 when the boys were 4, 5 and 6 yrs old their father left and moved to Columbus area, settling in Canal Winchester, an almost 3 hours way from Sandusky.

So here was THE PLAN for OUR SCHOOL OF CHOICE:

1. I as a parent have 3 sons, and when my first was born I started watching the local schools to see what our master plan to get them to a good college and with no student loans or minimal.

2. We talked to schools about CCP & AP

3. We added up public school fees and it matched the tuition we would be paying after financial aide.

4. We asked about what they expected and were they on the 10 pt glrade scale

5. We as parents did our research and watched.

6. We chose the local Catholic school at preschool to test it out and the kids loved it.

7. So we kept them there knowing they went through to 12th grade to only attend through 8th grade.

8. We new we would be moving them to a larger high school, more diverse on a high school only campus, and attrition to be ready for college.

9. As we watched we outlined the schools, we watched for stem -nothing, we watched for Gifted - nothing. So we laid a spreadsheet out for our oldest since his needs were good sports and different teachers. The schools they were at was pre-12th at 500 kids total and 35 in a graduating class.

10. They grew close relationships, at 8th grade graduation a group stayed, a group left for the public schools since too expensive and sacraments were done and then there was us. We went to the neighboring county 37 miles away to send them to Elyria Catholic.

11. Son 2, 165 IQ no school in Sandusky at that time could challenge him, he is thriving at Elyria Catholic High School (BLUE RIBBON), and has come out from being a social recluse to being a leader. He will be attending either RIT, Xavier (4 more yrs Catholic) or Baldwin Wallace. He is overfunded, but we pushed and appealed. (down from 64 colleges) The academic merit awards (Due to HS performance) and grants plus scholarships from the colleges of chemistry made this happen. No tuition, No student loan debt. He ranks in the top 5% of the nation 2% in 3 STEM subjects. The only reason he will not graduate in 16 weeks with STEM Honors is because last year they added .5 additional units for gym. So he cannot take that last AP class, so he has a semester of study hall and a semester of gym (He hates sports). He gets \$2500 for international travel study plus honors dorms since in honors program \$0. All fees and books \$0. And to make it fun they clean the honors dorms private bathrooms for them weekly.

12. NOTE we learned a lot. IF you have a high performing child, do honors and AP classes. DO NOT TAKE THE AP tests because every college that had the chem/biochem program said all our students start at OUR ground zero. Do not waste your money. DO Not take CCP we will not accept at this level.

13. Going back to son #1, he moved his Junior year to Canal Winchester to live with his dad. He was taking classes he took his freshman year. They had his records. He was in honors and when he transferred he could have graduated but he stayed and we agreed to keep him in line socially. HE LOVES Canal Winchester Football team . I am very proud of him, because no parent (I Tried) only the school counselor guided him. He wanted to do this on his own. They pushed 2 years at outlying campuses or community college for free then transfer your junior year to main campus. So he chose Ohio Univ. He enrolled at the Lancaster campus and is paying \$4k a semester after aide, he is paying for it and working 40-60 a week making pizzas.He is exhausted. Guess what he had to take algebra again for the 3rd time. But then OU dropped his major, and he had walked away from a private school the

top school for this program fully funded and being able to still play football and live on campus at \$0. He accepts his decision, he made by the influencers around him. He really just followed what everyone else down there was doing in Canal Winchester. He is and was a #. But I am very proud that he is pushing through and has moved to premed-sports therapy/medicine. He is doing great and is very independent, respectful, says hello to everyone he passes or have a nice day and opens doors. I cannot say where he got this from, he knows I talk to everyone. But he did get it in scouts, sports, school and home and in his parish family.

14. #3, is a junior, he is a type 1 diabetic. He already has visited the private college of his choice that has a 5 year partnership with Case if you go for your PHD in Psychology. Guess what a special program to fill the gap. \$0 if he completes 5 mission projects before the end of his freshman year. He already started one with his diabetes camp, to measure the difference modals from children who went to camo and those who had not.

So our plan worked. But our income did not. 2007 their father left to later settled in Canal Winchester, boys went every other weekend and came home Sunday night at 10pm. Nasty long 7 yrs i n court plus 3 custody battles, I had sole custody. The 2012 I had a stroke which lead to multiple years of other medical issues, In 2013 we got hit with Justin diagnosis and before taking him home had to fill \$3500 in prescriptions. That is monthly. Suddenly we were in or under the 200% poverty level. We could not use edchoice because you could only get it in k-1st grade, the school never told me that we may have been able to slip in a family of 4 on 1 income. Last fall I called for help they said wait, you can get it for 12th grade next year, they just opened up 6th grade. I took a 24% interest loan out from Lendmark to pay last years tuition. So edchoice would have been our savior years ago. Instead staving off the foreclosure on our home and saving it after 4 years.

The committee members need to know that people financial situation changes and the health and stability of schools also do change .The income I had in 2000 was 10x more than I make now.

Parents make the best decision in the BIG PICTURE, you cannot just live right now today and plan. So ripping out law that has been in place in for 9 months is absolutely unlawful. Can I just change the terms of my mortgage saying wait they just lowered the interest rate please change mine to match the current one; no I

cannot. So they made a promise, they signed a law and they cannot be allowed to say sorry-stop-we made a mistake.

My son#1 cannot go backwards in his decision he needs to move forward with new plans and adjust. They need to step it up and prove they are better examples to our children.

It is KIS-Keep It Simple

1. The fight over property taxes will never be won, never. Everyone needs to drop it. You have farmers not passing levies, you have older districts (in age) in retired years paying property taxes.
2. I personally have supported from the age of 16 to my current age of 56, 10 school districts and did not have my 3 boys until I was 36 yrs old and last one right before I hit 40. I was with rentals in 6 districts for 10 years and my own home supporting kids in all of those districts. This is never going to be a win. Let it be!
3. Open Enrollment does take more money one district testified \$1.5m , and only \$486k in Edchoice. Open enrollment opened up choice to many. Kids from Brooklyn or Cleveland are going to Strongsville for example.
4. I need to finish a question Rep Jones asked last evening. A catholic school in elementary tuition is about \$3500. If you belong to a catholic parish that parish sends over \$1000 for your child= \$2500. This is the same if your child comes from a public school, any member gets tat from the parish. They do not charge extra for public. They offer multi student discounts. Elyria Catholic only has you pay tuition for 2 children with financial aide at any school year. So a family of 5 all attending the same year would only be issued a bill for 2 students.
5. The Cleveland and Toledo Diocese are different , and I can address those with you since each has different policies in taking stated or federal program monies. Elyria Catholic pays for the free lunch program and takes no federal money for example.

6. Senator Fedor, I can assure you I as a Catholic cannot part the sea and walk on water. I usually fall in when I try. Comments such as that you made was irresponsible as an elected official.
7. What is the fix make it easy.
8. What all schools need back, please fund drivers education at the junior and senior level. I could work more not driving my kids and they would not be sitting with hands out to do something with friends. They would not be entitled. But almost \$500-600 to get your child thru drivers education and in cars. Nobody can afford this then insurance and multiple cars, my sons have renewed their temps twice.5 credit in high school. These kids will then be able to get jobs ! Sandusky has a local fundraiser from the pta, school and parents to give this back to the school.

Thanks you for allowing me to testify. I appreciate your time, I can answer any questions you may have.