

2/19/20

To All Who Are Dedicating Their Time for the Cause of Education in Ohio:

Thank you for reading my testimony for consideration of the proposed SB 89.

I am a parent of two children and a teacher of many. I have taught in Ohio for eleven years, six at a private school and five at a public school. I have taught in Indiana at a public school for three years. My diverse experience as an educator helps to give me a broad perspective on what works, and what does not work, in education. I have also witnessed this as a parent, and would like to share with you why I am in support of SB 89 and the Ohio Public School System, and why SB 89 is the first of many steps that should be taken.

I have been a resident of Ohio for the past 23 years, since I moved here to get my Masters of Science in Microbiology at Miami University. In the process of earning my degree, I taught many college level courses. After graduation, I decided that my passion for science would be best spent sharing it with others. So I achieved a Master of Arts in Teaching, and I am currently licensed to teach High School Biology, Chemistry and Physics.

My first few years of teaching high School were in Richmond, Indiana. I taught in a school that was struggling; Indiana spent less per pupil than Ohio did, and our school had a large portion of their population that were at or below the poverty level. With a strong principal, we focused on building positive relationships with the students and were able to dramatically increase our graduation rate and the quality of each students' experience. This school was very diverse, economically and culturally. From this experience I learned that not all schools are created equal- some come with huge challenges that exist outside of the school property or hours. Many of these children didn't have enough food, or even know where their parents were many evenings (the one at least that was not incarcerated). Students in my classes lived in apartments of friends or on the floor of a neighbor's house- how were they to go home and finish their project for science class? Increased funding for this school could help decrease class sizes, allowing the teachers to get to know their students better and reach all of the students. But the tax money just wasn't there.

Looking for a way to be a more effective teacher, I took a job at a private K -8 school in Oxford, Ohio (where I live). Here I had much smaller class sizes (less than 10 students in a two-grade band), but this did not solve everything. The private school experience may seem at first to be the solution to providing each unique student with what they need, but there is a flaw in this. The small private school also has a small staff. While we were excellent educators, we were required out of necessity to teach classes that were out of our expertise. I taught K - 5 Math, plus K- 8 Health and PE, none of which I am licensed to do. And this was along with teaching all of the students science. The quality of their education suffered despite my efforts and abilities. I can do calculus, but that does not help someone instruct a struggling third grader in math.

My current teaching position was my next, and I hope it will also be from where I retire in about 20 years. I teach at Talawanda High School, and I could not be more proud. The school is a wonderful blend of the diversity I saw at the larger school in Richmond, but small enough that I know most of the students when they graduate. Here is a true success in education- the administration and teachers work for the students. We focus on getting to know each student and helping them get what they need to be successful. Here are some examples of our amazing programs:

**Student Advocacy Program:** Select teachers have approximately ten students that are identified by the students themselves, their parents or other educators as needing an extra mentor. These select teachers meet with each student multiple times a week, keeping in touch with their emotional and academic needs. Coordination with Guidance Counselors and Parents are routine. Here I have had many students that have come up to me after graduation (some of them years later), and expressed their appreciation. I had a student who lost both parents while in high school, and is now a successfully employed graduate from Cincinnati State's Culinary School. He came to my classroom after finishing his culinary school to thank me and the many other teachers that helped him.

**Special Education Program:** When discussing SB 89 and EdChoice with some friends, the response that I received was "Well, what about the students that have special needs- wouldn't a private school meet these better?" My response was that public schools BY LAW must meet these student's needs; private schools do not. I had a student who graduated two years ago who has cerebral palsy. He could verbally participate well in class discussions, but struggled with written assessment formats. He needed and had an aide walk him to each of his classes (he became disoriented easily), and an aide to assist him in each class. We (our administration, the digital productions teacher and I), found a role that he, with his amazing speaking voice and verbal abilities could fill. I provided him with copies of my quizzes and tests for my other classes and he read them aloud and recorded them. Tests on Tape. These are now available to any student who could use this accommodation. Speaking with him and his mother recently, he is pursuing a career of taking text to speech.

**HOPE Squad:** This is going to serve as a representative for all of the clubs and sports that a larger, diverse public school can offer. This is a group of student-selected students that are trained to be an ear for students that are going through a difficult time. Teenagers are growing up in a world where mental health is of great importance. Our Guidance Counselors have had extensive training to not only help students in need (from frustrated violence to thoughts of suicide), but to train other staff and students for this program. It is new, in its first year, but already the student body has embraced this. The private school I worked at had NO guidance counselors.

As a parent, I have seen my daughter attend the public schools in the Talawanda District through graduation. She is an adult now, and revels in the diverse group of friends she was honored to meet at these schools. She had her share of successes and struggles, but she and I both feel the education and experience she gained were everything we could have hoped for. My son began school at the private school where I was a teacher. His kindergarten class was him and one other student who was autistic and yelled most of his time at school. No one was

qualified to aid this child, and my son had no other peers. By third grade, my husband and I enrolled him in the public elementary school in our neighborhood. There he was quickly guided by the teachers and identified as gifted. He was given the opportunity to participate in the ETC Program (Extended Total Curriculum), and flourished. He is now finishing middle school where he is able to take a math class that is two years ahead of the typical curriculum, along with his peers. This is only possible because the public school made these accommodations. He tried the cello in sixth grade orchestra and found that he loves music. He is scheduled to take orchestra to continue the cello next year, along with joining the Steel Band and take a music theory class. These are the available options that one can get from a well run and funded public school.

My testimony speaks from a parent's view and an educator's view. It speaks from someone who has worked in both a public school and private school, in both Indiana and Ohio. In my experience, there is just no contest. The gifts of a public school system far surpass what passes for education at some private schools. I would be saddened if any student had to compromise with less, or if our public schools suffered from the diverting of funding.

Please Continue to Fund Our Greatest Resource: All of Ohio's Youth and Their Education.  
To this end, please pass SB 89, and consider the following next steps:

- Set the eligibility level at 200% of the federal poverty level
- Provide funding to offset losses due to exponential voucher growth
- Establish meaningful accountability measures for private schools that accept vouchers
- Immediately repeal the territory transfer law
- Listen to the BASA recommendations to fix the report card
- Fix the report card measures
- Listen and work through the Cupp Patterson school funding proposal
- Fix school funding (as you know it has been unconstitutional-1997 DeRolph case)
- Fix the graduation requirements (Again, BASA has recommendations)
- Include educators in decisions related to education
- Allow more local control by the Boards of Education

Thank you so much for your attention to my testimony. I appreciate your dedication to serve the citizens of Ohio. I would be honored to be contacted if you have any questions or if I can be of any assistance.

Sincerely,  
Heidi Schran