

My name is Katie Colwell, I reside in Butler County, in the City of Trenton. I am writing in regards to the EdChoice program.

I am asking that you stop the 60 day delay and continue with the program as originally planned for this school year. The application process should have already started. This is pulling the rug out from under thousands of parents who were already promised that this program was an option. Families cannot wait 60 days to find out about their children's educational future.

If you are concerned about the potential financial impact to the districts, please vote to provide funding to districts, but do not take opportunities away from Ohio students.

Our Government spends billions of dollars each year in foreign aid to other countries. Fight to divert some of that money into our public school systems! The United States of America shouldn't have failing schools or lack of funding to our schools. This goes beyond the EdChoice Issue.

Taking away EdChoice isn't going to fix the problem. The Public School system is failing with or without EdChoice. Public School Systems need more funding and a change to the countless tests and exams that have been mandated. These tests do nothing for the students. The teachers spend more time teaching the kids how to prepare and take a test than they do actually teaching the material needed to pass the pointless test.

I am unable to attend the Ed Choice hearings because of work, but I have been trying to stay up to date on what is being discussed at the Hearings.

I heard there was a question asking "Why should you be able to use an EdChoice Scholarship at a religious school?" Why Shouldn't you be able to? To those asking that question..... Do you have firsthand experience having your children enrolled at a Religious School?

I myself have one child in Public School and one in Private School. I feel my child in Private School is learning far more advanced things compared to my other child when she was in the same grade.

Did you know another key factor for failing Public Schools is lack of Parent Participation?

I can't speak for every Religious School, but I know at my daughters school we have huge Parent Participation! Her private school feels more like family which I firmly believes helps in the education process as a whole

Why aren't we ask how or why 1,227 Public Schools are on the EdChoice list to begin with. Public Schools are failing the children and they want to question why the parents want to use another school system and what type of school they want to use? They shouldn't have a say in which school the parent chooses to use their Educational Choice Scholarship. Perhaps if they use this same amount of effort into bettering the schools, their school wouldn't be on the list in the first place.

Why don't you ask parents exactly what the EdChoice program means to their family. To the School it's all about money. To the family it means so much more.

I want to take a moment and explain how I found out about EdChoice and why it means so much, not only to myself, but most importantly, to my daughter who is a First Grader at Immanuel Lutheran in Hamilton Ohio.

I am a single mother, don't worry, I do not use that as an excuse! I use that as motivation. I have worked at the same company for 17 years. I have worked incredibly hard to get to where I am in life and I am very proud of myself.

Rewind to 3 years ago. Financially I made too much money to obtain government assistance, but not enough to afford a real daycare or preschool. I paid a family friend to babysit my youngest daughter since I couldn't afford the cost of a Daycare Facility. With her being preschool age, I knew it was in her best interest to attend a preschool and get a jump start on skills she will need for Kindergarten, as well as the socialization that she was not getting at her babysitters house. Preschool is only half day, so I would still have to pay my sitter plus the Preschool. As I called every preschool in the area for pricing, I quickly realized that it was not something I was going to be able to afford.

A friend suggested Head Start, so I looked on the Website to get all the information. I thought maybe I had found something, especially since their slogan is "No Child Left Behind." I called and was told that the program is income based and I was over income. My heart just sank. I asked if there was a pay option and was told no. I said, "So my child gets left behind because I make too much money for her to go to preschool, but not enough to pay for it out of pocket." I felt so helpless and felt like I had failed my daughter.

That night a girl that I work with told me all about Immanuel Lutheran and the Scholarship programs they have available. She urged me to check into it so I did. I set up a meeting with Admissions and got all of the information. EdChoice isn't an option for Preschool, but I was able to use a Scholarship funded through the church and could use their daycare. The cost was only \$5.00 more a month than I was already paying my private sitter. I was beyond thrilled! Immanuel Lutheran had been so wonderful, accommodating and welcoming. She had learned so much more than I ever expected that year. For Kindergarten we were able to apply for EdChoice. She was awarded the Scholarship and is doing amazing. She is now in First Grade.

I also have a daughter in 6th grade who attends Edgewood Middle School. Having one kid in private school and one in public school has given me the advantage of seeing both sides of the system. My 1st grader is learning things that my other daughter didn't learn until 3rd or 4th grade. The teachers are more invested in their students and seem to have more compassion and more drive to get the students to be the best version of themselves that they can be.

You do not get this feeling at a public school. Perhaps that is due to all the protocols, testing and regulations that the state puts on the public school system. Maybe some things on that level should change.

What I do know is that there are many parents in my same boat whose children deserve the best education. Not just an okay one. Another thing I don't understand is how our Government can send billions of dollars in foreign aid to other countries, but let its own country have failing school systems.

Please end the delay and let the current school year continue as originally planned. I think it would be best to figure this out over the next year. That will give everyone time to work out the BEST plan and not a RUSHED plan.

Thank you!  
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