

Dear Primary and Secondary Education Committee,

Please read my testimony below and thank you for sharing my voice at the hearing.

My name is Lisa Cinadr and I am the proud Principal of Saint Ambrose Catholic School in Brunswick, Ohio. Saint Ambrose School is a nationally, state and locally-awarded school of excellence in faith formation and academics including STEAM and 21st Century learning. We are a designated State of Ohio STEM and STEAM school and national Partnership for 21st Century Learning/P21 Learning Exemplar School. At the heart of our mission is the belief that *"we are a Catholic school where Jesus Christ is everything for us and our students are challenged to reach their potential."* As part of our STEAM designation, our identity guiding our work and deepening the contexts by which we engage all partners and stakeholders is: *"Saint Ambrose School educators and students are innovative leaders using their faith, skills, talents and knowledge to solve humanitarian and technological issues affecting our world."*

As such, we pay close attention to educational trends and use researched best practices to teach above minimum state and national standards with creative and innovative practices. Many partners in education, medicine, civics and many more assist us in providing real-world and challenging learning experiences that will benefit not only the students themselves but our communities, Ohio and the nation. Standardized test scores (and current student and alumni accolades) prove that the work we are doing causes our students to grow and achieve. The rigor of our programming and our ability to provide personalized, differentiated instruction affords even greater student success.

Why shouldn't all parents have this choice for their children?

We currently have families from two Medina County schools on the current school year's designated list with the potential for at least 46+ families who are waiting in the balance for a decision. This is wrong. The EdChoice Residency Scholarship program was promised to them.

Per the Diocese of Cleveland, "The Ohio General Assembly's move to delay the EdChoice Scholarship (voucher) application until April 1st with the intent of modifying the program takes choices away from Ohio families. We support parents' right to choose what is best for their children and highly value the EdChoice program, which empowers parents, saves taxpayer dollars, and strengthens all educational offerings, public and private.

The official [documents and teachings](#) of the global Catholic Church have long affirmed the value of Catholic education and parents' rights to choose schools, including with the assistance of the state.

Ohio's scholarship (voucher) programs are about social justice. Individuals and families of means have always exercised school choice by choosing to live in districts with public

schools of their liking (choice by residential selection). Vouchers expand that choice to others.

School choice is an improvement strategy. Research in [Ohio](#) and [nationwide](#) has found choice policies associated with improved traditional public school performance as well as parental satisfaction for those who choose.

School choice providers are accountable to results. All scholarship students take state-mandated tests, with results published online by school and grade level. When dissatisfied customers exit, they take all of their funding, which is the ultimate accountability.

EdChoice is cost effective. Last year the state reported average spending of \$9,724 per pupil in traditional public schools, while EdChoice scholarship awards averaged \$4,892.

Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Cleveland, which are supported mainly on tuition and philanthropy, provide more than \$300 million in value by educating tens of thousands outside of Ohio's funding formula. Scholarships enable more to participate, saving costs for taxpayers.

Choice programs do not violate any constitutional separation of Church and state. The right of parents and guardians to use scholarships (vouchers) to choose the best environment for children regardless of school type was affirmed by the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed in [Zelman v. Simmons-Harris](#) (2002).

Ohio's school funding formula was found to be unconstitutional because of its [reliance on property taxes](#), not its choice programs, which are efficient. Major changes to choice programs without addressing the formula ignore the root causes of problems.

The current delay means more than 30,000 students statewide already participating in the scholarship program are not able to apply to renew at this time." (Catholic Diocese of Cleveland, February 2020)

Too many families - and schools - have 2020-2021 budgets/decisions that are now in a state of uncertainty.

I implore you to reconsider and allow Ohio families who prefer a premier Catholic education at Saint Ambrose School (and other schools) to be given the opportunity they were promised. Please maintain the integrity of the EdChoice Scholarship program as presented in November 2019, and open the EdChoice Scholarship (Residency) window now so Ohio families can apply with confidence and allow their children to attend the school they know is best for their children.

Thank you for your efforts on this important House Bill and for your consideration of my testimony.

Blessings,

Lisa M. Cinadr, M.Ed.

Principal

[330.460.7350](tel:330.460.7350)

LCinadr@StASchool.us

Belief • Connectedness • Responsibility • Strategic • Relator