

Michelle Brousek - Brunswick, OH EdChoice Statement

My name is Michelle Brousek, I am a parent of two private school students one at Padua Franciscan High School (Parma) and one at Saint Ambrose School (Brunswick). As a private school employee, it is my responsibility to help others find the educational path they want to choose for their children at Saint Ambrose School. As an Institutional Advancement Admissions team member at Saint Ambrose School in Brunswick, many families have openly inquired about education at Saint Ambrose School by using the EdChoice Scholarship for their families due to under performing schools in our area along with the financial support to help them provide what they want for their children.

Many families approached our school months ago when the scholarship was announced looking forward to being able to choose Saint Ambrose School with the assistance of this scholarship. The families were dissatisfied with their current educational experience in their schools assigned to them. New families were eager to utilize the EdChoice to get the Saint Ambrose experience. This EdChoice scholarship gave these families **HOPE** in being able to provide the educational experience they want for their children.

They are taxpayers.

They vote for school levies.

They are people who care about their community where they live.

They are families who have the right to make a CHOICE for their children and utilize their tax dollars owed to them.

Many of these families have already paid registration fees and have made financial changes in their lives to make this experience possible with the EdChoice Scholarship granted to their children. The emotional impact on these families over the last several weeks not knowing what the future holds for their children is stressful, worrisome, and very difficult not knowing what the next steps will be for them.

Our staff has been in constant contact with our families who are depending on the EdChoice scholarship. The amount of calls and emails that have been fielded amongst our team with these families have been many on a daily basis. This impacts over **45 new students** at Saint Ambrose School along with all of our 8th grade families wanting to continue their experience at Catholic High Schools in our area. The financial help being provided by EdChoice at the high school level is crucial for families especially those with multiple children, single parents on one income, and those wanting to provide for their children what is deserved. We are trying to provide positive vision and reinforcement for these families but this is **very difficult** to do because of the last minute decisions from public officials.

WHY take away something that was offered when these lists came out months ago?

WHY are we questioning this NOW?

WHY all of the sudden are we pointing the finger at private schools about taking money away from public schools when we are owed our own tax dollars?

WHY two weeks before February 1st to decide to change what was already put in place?

WHY are we waiting until April 1st to open the window again? This is detrimental from a budget standpoint.

WHY impact these families and students when they have the right to CHOOSE where their tax money should be going to educate them?

Keep the EdChoice Scholarship in place as it was announced and rolled out. It's the law!

Yes, we are discussing this issue now under time constraints. The entire situation is putting stress on families and their daily lives. These families are concerned. Please take the time to be open to the issues with both parties and HEAR EVERYONE not on time constraints! Find a solution that makes sense for both public and private school tax payers, so they can CHOOSE what is best for their child. DEVELOP a task force team of representatives of all parties before making any traumatic decisions to this program. Make the changes necessary for all parties with NEXT year's application process. THAT is the right thing to do!

As a young teenager attending a Catholic High School years ago, I could never understand WHY my parents could get NO support from the state for tuition. They were taxpayers. They supported every school levy. My mom even worked a 2nd job as public official for 18 years to help with the private school tuition so we could get the experience and education needed for us. That was TIME away from our family to get the money NEEDED to get the education my parents wanted for us. It was the best sacrifice made for my brother and I. A sacrifice that they should have been able to get assistance with.

As I have become a parent of private school students, this has greatly affected our family. My daughter chose Padua High School because it was the place that she felt comfortable, safe and happy. The process of choosing and applying for a private high school doesn't happen overnight. My daughter and her classmates started searching for a school a year prior to attending the high school of their choice. From shadowing the school, attending sporting events, partaking in entrance test preparation classes, taking multiple entrance exams, applying for additional scholarships and financial aid, building new relationships, getting accepted to the school of their choice and making the decision to move forward has been an emotional and financial process over the last year for many families. These families made a lot of their decisions based on the EdChoice Scholarship. For our family, Padua was the place to call home. I am an alumni of Padua and it was great to share with my daughter everything I loved about it. The education is beyond superb. The faculty and staff are amazing. The comfort of HOME is what drew her to CHOOSE there. The public high school in our area was not a place where my daughter would flourish. She needed a smaller environment to stay focused to alleviate her anxiety challenges. My husband and I discussed greatly on how we would afford private high school education, because it was what we wanted for our children. My daughter applied for as many scholarships as possible to help alleviate the financial burden of private high school for both my husband and I. She knew I worked in Catholic School and this EdChoice Scholarship would be helpful for us. My

daughter is thriving there. She has a vocal music scholarship, maintains high honors, plays varsity soccer and freshman/jv basketball, a student Bruin Ambassador and gets involved in every aspect of the school as possible.

Many of my daughter's closest friends at school rely on EdChoice. These families have multiple children wanting the Padua experience. Majority of those students DEPEND on the EDChoice Scholarship and without it she would have NEVER met those students. Those students would not be getting the experience they are now. Just because we choose to send our children to private school doesn't mean we don't support our local school systems. It makes it VERY difficult to support the school system when the true FACTS are not being heard and supported by the local school system. What everyone has to be reminded about this situation is the CHILDREN. It is not about the test scores, the parents, teachers, administrations, government legislatures, public schools or private schools. It is about the passion we have for our CHILDREN to be able to CHOOSE their educational journey that fits best for them. Let them continue to CHOOSE because it is their CHOICE! These school lists have been out for months. The districts, OED and public officials have had plenty of time to address the program.

I am sure you all have children or have experience with children in your families.

I am sure some or many of you currently have children in the public school that you may have considered a thought to choose to send your children to private school but being a public official it helped your job experience a little easier to stay the course.

I am sure some or many of you currently have children attending private school and as a public official get a head turn sometimes. I know my mother did. BUT she spoke the truth, kept to the facts, kept her beliefs in order and did what was right. She followed the law no matter what mistakes were made.

Decisions like this are not easy when emotions and time constraints are in place.

Every puzzle has different pieces to make the full puzzle come to life and see the vision.

Every student is different and needs an optional way to learn in different environments to REACH full potential.

Do what is RIGHT!

DEVELOP a better plan for all. Don't WIPE IT OUT completely because that is NOT the answer.

FOCUS on the children and needs for those families.

DISCUSS the FACTS on both sides.

IMPLEMENT what is needed to be successful for all.

KEEP the EdChoice Scholarship as it was announced because it is the law and families have invested a year of time and money in selecting a private school. It's not like signing up for a public school overnight. It takes a lot of time in making this decision and these families are depending on EdChoice because that is what was marketed by OED several times. PLEASE DO THE RIGHT THING!

Someone is responsible for making these changes and there are thousands of people depending on EdChoice. It is in place for a reason and we must move forward and keep this application process as it is for the 2020-2021 school year.

Thank you for providing what is right for our children!

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