

Ridgewood Local School District

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Good Morning, Chairperson Jones and members of the House Bill 9 Conference Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today regarding Ohio's EdChoice Voucher program. My name is Mike Masloski. I am the superintendent of Ridgewood Local Schools in West Lafayette, Ohio.

I would like to share a story with you about Ridgewood Elementary School. Ridgewood Elementary houses 430 students in Grades Pre-K to Grade 3. In January 2020, we were notified by the Ohio Department of Education that we were awarded the High Progress School of Honor. This honor was only awarded to about 72 schools in Ohio. The criteria for this award is based on the following state report card data: 1) performance gains on the Ohio State Test for a five-year period (2015-2019), evaluated against statewide gain test results in Grade 3 ELA and Math. Ridgewood Elementary's gains in its combined ELA and Math proficiency over the most recent five years met or exceeded the 90th percentile of all statewide gains; 2) Gap Closing Grade of an A for the most recent report card.

In addition to receiving this award, Ridgewood Elementary received the highest federal compliance designation of Independent based on Ohio's accountability system --the state report card. Ridgewood Elementary has not been identified at the state level as a school of focus, watch or priority for continuous improvement, which are designations also based on Ohio's accountability system -- the state report card. Ridgewood's Preschool also has been awarded a 5-star rating. Finally, Ridgewood Elementary has an overall rating of a B on the state report card.

In spite of these awards, designations and recognitions, Ridgewood Elementary is identified as an underperforming school by the Ohio Department of Education based on the criteria for EdChoice Scholarship. This is outrageous and irrational. There are five areas of criteria that may designate a school as underperforming. Our school was identified by the criteria of literacy, which represents Improving At-Risk K-3 Readers. The data used from this criterion is from the spring 2019, spring 2018 and spring 2014 state report cards.

During the past five years, Ridgewood Elementary has had 100% of our students meet the 3rd grade Reading guarantee. We received a letter grade of B for Improving At-Risk K-3 Readers on the spring 2019 state report card. Our elementary school is being designated as underperforming based on data not only on the spring 2014 state report card, but also on data from the 2012-2013 school years. I'm not sure how you can have it both ways using the same data on the same accountability system -- Ohio's State Report Card.

To me it is really simple, EdChoice was established to take taxpayer-voted money for public education and to subsidize financially-strained private schools. The performance criteria under EdChoice were created to justify sending public funds from "failing schools" to private schools. This is unwarranted by my example of Ridgewood Elementary Schools.

Public schools not only in Ohio but the United States are the reason we are the greatest country in the world. Public funds that were voted for public schools are being given to private schools that do not have the same oversight or accountability as public schools. Many private schools, such as Diocese of Columbus, are running

campaigns supporting parental choice; we are not against choice, but we are opposed to money leaving our school. The campaign ads also discuss how private schools are better equipped at teaching character, morals and ethics. This is a false narrative -- public schools across Ohio and this nation do it better every single day. We prepare students to be productive citizens in the public world in which we all live.

In closing, I would like to invite any legislator, as well as our governor and state superintendent, to meet and talk to the children and staff of Ridgewood Elementary School. If you support EdChoice, I also invite you, to tell them face-to-face that they are attending and teaching at an underperforming school.

Chairman Jones and members of the House Bill 9 Conference Committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide input regarding Ohio's EdChoice Voucher Program. I am happy to address your questions.