

Dear House Education Committee

I am writing to you to urge you to eliminate the EdChoice voucher program. I am writing to you as a parent and an educator. 90% of Ohio students attend a public school; the EdChoice voucher program takes away money from our students and diverts it to private and religious schools.

I live in Berea and teach at Copley-Fairlawn City Schools. My son attends Berea city schools. Both my home and work districts have a school building identified as an EdChoice voucher eligible if the program is to stay as it is. Under HB9, as passed by the Senate, the schools in my districts would not be eligible to be on the EdChoice voucher program. This is good news but not good enough because this change is only valid for 3 years and there will still be 425 schools that will still be losing their local tax dollars to the private and religious schools. The Senate amended bill also increases the income-eligibility and thus keeps draining local school districts of vital resources.

The EdChoice voucher program is based on a flawed report card system. The report cards need to be fixed and not used as a punitive tool. When as a teacher, I test my students I use my tests as a diagnostic tool, to guide my teaching and not to punish students. If my students were unsuccessful in painting a realistic painting instead of labeling them as "failing" and taking away painting supplies from them, I would analyze my teaching methods and offer my students varied resources to help them succeed. The EdChoice voucher does the opposite, it punishes the students by taking away vital resources from the school district.

Ohio's voucher programs drain needed resources from approximately 90% of students who attend Ohio's local public schools. Even those who support vouchers should be able to agree that providing "choice" to some students shouldn't come at the expense of other students. Unfortunately, due to how EdChoice vouchers are funded, the opposite is true. The expansion of vouchers has resulted in higher deductions from state payments to school districts. This puts increased pressure on local taxpayers or puts programs that serve public school students at risk. The expansion of eligibility for vouchers and increased program costs come at a time when districts are under-funded and are having to go back to local taxpayers to pass levies.

I applaud SB 89 as passed by the House. It keeps local money with local school districts by eliminating new performance-based vouchers, except for the siblings of current EdChoice voucher recipients. The income-based voucher program will be funded by the state and will not put a strain on the local school district's resources.

I am urging the committee to include the amendments that were introduced to SB89 by the House to HB9 and abolish the performance-based EdChoice voucher program. The students of Ohio deserve a government that looks after the interests of every student, not just a "choice" few.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Nusrat Mehdi