

## Written Testimony Regarding Ed Choice Voucher Program

February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Dear Chairman Jones and members of the House Bill 9 Conference Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to allow me to speak today about Ohio's EdChoice Voucher Program. While I could not make the trip down to Columbus, I appreciate you taking the time to read my testimony and hear my thoughts. My name is Sara Bundy and I come to you as a mother of four children enrolled in the public-school system of Boardman Local Schools.

I wanted to share our story with you. When my husband and I were looking at buying our first home nearly 20 years ago one of the biggest factors that we took into account when choosing where to do so was the public-school system. We ultimately choose Boardman (which neither of us attended as students) because of the opportunities we knew that our future children would have attending a school that values academics, athletics, and the arts.

Fast forward to today, where we will be attending high school orientation for our oldest. We also have a 10-year-old 4<sup>th</sup> grader attending Center Intermediate School and two 7-year-old first graders at Stadium Drive Elementary. While certainly not perfect, we were not wrong about our children attending this great public-school district. One that is NOT a failing district, despite the recent EdChoice eligibility designation. Our children and the nearly 4,000 other students in our district have great opportunity to be enriched with great sports programs, stellar music programs, and strong academic programs.

I urge you to consider what will happen to the students attending public schools like Boardman Local, who are not failing and would be forced to foot the bill for EdChoice Vouchers. Our district, as well as many others in the state, are tapped. The public cannot afford to pass levies to make up the monies we will lose (and I can almost guarantee they won't pass...we barely passed our last one.). So, then what? Will they cut special education services that our daughter (and nearly 700 other students in our district) receives and NEEDS to help her overcoming her learning differences? Will they be forced to cut music and art, despite having one the best programs in Ohio? Will we be forced to offer less AP classes offered to those that work so hard to be at the top of their classes? Will athletes be required to pay to play, which may not be possible for many? The amount of money that our district may be forced to pay will undoubtedly have an effect of all of these things at the expense of our children. This simply does not seem fair.

I ask you to also take those points as well as the following into consideration when making your decisions about the EdChoice Program:

- Why should the public schools pay for those to attend a private school when those schools are not held to the same standards as us? While certainly the Ohio Report Card system is flawed and I think all of us can agree it needs help, how can you force

public school systems to give their money to schools that do not even have to meet minimum standards?

- Wasn't the point of the EdChoice program to provide equal opportunities for students in failing districts? Boardman Local (and many of the now 1,200 school in the same position) are NOT failing. To offer these vouchers at the public expense just so students can have a choice to attend a parochial school makes no sense.

I appreciate your time and hope that you will take this testimony into consideration. God Speed and best wishes as you make the undoubtedly difficult decisions before you. Thank you.

Kind Regards,

Sara C Bundy