

To whom it may concern:

Greetings to you. I am a parent with children who attend schools in Columbus, Ohio only due to the opportunity granted by the EdChoice scholarship. We are very thankful to have more choices for education. To cut or eliminate the funding to this would be awful for many reasons. I personally am a product of Columbus public schools from Kindergarten through 12th grade. After having children of my own, public school was not always the best option for my children. I currently have children attending both public and private schools. There is not one model that works for every child and options would be limited without School Choice.

It appears there are many factors that the state of Ohio is not considering in reference to School Choice. To attend a number of the private schools the EdChoice scholarship does not cover 100% of the tuition and fees so many parents are still paying a portion out-of-pocket. The funding for public schools such as the building, maintenance, staff, and supplies comes from different sources including tax-payer dollars. There are a number of sources that fund public schools which are not affected by the EdChoice scholarship. When a tax levy is passed for increased funding for public schools those dollars are shared by taxpayers regardless if they have children or anyone in their household that attends school. As a taxpayer I remember how the City of Columbus tried to force taxpayers to pay for an Arena for entertainment, but will not invest in our children with that same vigor. The majority vote decided not to fund Nationwide Arena and a donor offered to pay for the construction in an announcement the day after the vote! The taxpayers remember how time and time again the education of our children has been looked at as a business instead of an educational engine that needs to be maintained. A cut to the funding of School Choice would not fix the problem in "failing" schools. A failing school would still have the same building and staff. The private schools should not be targeted as they focus on standards and have their own governing boards. I believe the real issue is the public funds not being appropriated equally across school districts. Does a student that lives in a suburb like Westerville have the same amount of money allocated for his/her education as a Columbus public school student? If the goal is for every student to achieve the same quality education, then why is there such a disparity in the resources available between schools?

Making such a big decision in haste could snatch children out of an environment where they are thriving and succeeding. Classroom size is a factor. Some of my children get very distracted in a classroom with a high number of students. The private schools our children attend have limits on the classroom size which greatly assists in the learning process. Our experience with private schools shows that the curriculum is more advanced and that works better in many cases with a bright child. It does not sound practical to add more children to a failing school when the status stays the same year after year. This would be different if 80% of the schools had improved scores to a 70% or better but it's like adding more cargo to a sinking ship. We have also experienced a different level of discipline not available in public schools combined with more parent involvement. The amount of homework has been more consistent in the private schools which establishes better study habits early. Even the uniform requirement assists in the daily routine. Meetings such as Parent-Teacher Conference are mandatory. This helps the accountability of the children in the learning process and motivation. There is focus on proper

behavior. Allow me to explain. My son attended a private school. He transitioned to a public school during the school year. There was an opening in only one school in our area. It was not a good experience. He got bullied at the school which initiated us taking him to weekly counseling. He struggled with that at school and on the bus. I started receiving phone calls throughout the day because he was having problems. He would get sent to PEAK and suspended. Keep in mind he never got suspended at the private school. I have spoke with other parents who take their children to counseling because of bullying received in public schools. His grades suffered and were no reflection of his true ability.

One day my son did not arrive home from the bus and this was after 5:00 p.m. I called Transportation which did not have an answer so I called previous numbers on my caller ID since the school was closed at that time. Thankfully I had the direct line for the principal who was still at the school. I explained to her that my son was missing. She began to search the classrooms in the school. She found him in a classroom sitting on the computer with headphones on playing games. No one was paying attention to my child!! I can give you another example of what happened in this failing school. We found out that if my son had a problem in his 3rd grade classroom he was being sent away to sit in a 1st grade classroom to play on the computer! This was not a reward and where he was receiving any instruction. My husband and I were highly upset that he was being pushed to the side and ignored. That school did not put ANY value on his education. That was shameful for the Columbus Public School system. These are not the only bad experiences we have had with the Columbus Public School System. These things affected my family. Other families have examples too of how the responsibility of failing schools falls heavily on the school and administration. A child can feel when he is not wanted and this has an effect on his performance. Without the discipline of having homework through most of the week my son's study habits decreased. Elementary school especially are the molding years in a child's life when they should be looked at as important along with an emphasis on learning to do their best. It is not good policy or a good decision to limit alternatives to families when some of the public schools offer a poor learning environment.

The parents in our household work full-time jobs so afterschool care is needed. Why is this mentioned? Because public schools in my area offer Latchkey for afterschool care. With 2 children in elementary school that cost would be about \$600 a month to attend a public school. If you estimate being in school for 8 months that totals \$4,800 for one school year. One advantage of some private schools is that afterschool care is charged by the hour or by the day and not a flat fee. We were actually able to save money on afterschool care going to the private school vs. the public school. It is a false perception that private schools were only established for the children of the rich or upper-class. Children from different families can succeed in private schools when given the chance. There were times when I chose the public schools I wanted my child to attend, but they could not due to the lottery. Without School Choice parents are given unnecessary limits to education.

The bottom line is that parents want and need a quality education for their children and the governing body in the state of Ohio should not impose the restriction on School Choice. The importance is for our children to have the options available to them to find what works for each

family. Please do not ignore our children and take this decision seriously as it could affect hundreds of families. Thank you for your attention. May God bless our state and foster a healthy educational environment of learning for all of our children.

Silvina Walker