

# WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

Please complete the Witness Information Form before testifying:

Date: 2/19/20 - Testify 2/20/20

Name: Stephonia Williams

Are you representing: Yourself  parent Organization

Organization (If Applicable): Lima Central Catholic High School

Position/Title: Principal / CEO, Parent

Address: 7205 Cable Rd / 1701 Lakewood Ave

City: Lima State: OH Zip: 45805

Best Contact Telephone: 614.578.7937 Email: SWilliams@apps.lchs.edu

Do you wish to be added to the committee notice email distribution list? Yes  No

Business before the committee

Legislation (Bill/Resolution Number): HB9

Specific Issue: Edchoice

Are you testifying as a: Proponent  Opponent  Interested Party

Will you have a written statement, visual aids, or other material to distribute? Yes  No

(If yes, please send an electronic version of the documents, if possible, to the Chair's office prior to committee. You may also submit hard copies to the Chair's staff prior to committee.)

How much time will your testimony require? 45 minutes

Please provide a brief statement on your position:

It is important to provide families with educational options. Ed choice provides greater opportunities for parents to have choices for where their children are educated.

Please be advised that this form and any materials (written or otherwise) submitted or presented to this committee are records that may be requested by the public and may be published online.

**Stephanie Williams**  
**Principal/CEO Lima Central Catholic**  
**Conference Committee Hearing**  
**Opponent HB 9**

**I. Introduction**

Good evening Chairman Jones, Rep. Edwards, Rep. Robertson, Sen. Peterson, Sen. Huffman and Sen. Fedor. My name is Stephanie Williams. I am the principal/CEO of Lima Central Catholic High School located in northwest Ohio. Lima Central Catholic is a four-year high school enrolling 255 students in grades nine through twelve. As the only Catholic High School within the city limits, Lima Central Catholic High School helps serve the educational and spiritual needs of Lima's Catholic community.

**II Background**

The EdChoice scholarship provides greater opportunities for parents to have choices for where their children are educated. We believe parents are the primary educators of their children, therefore, parental choice in education is a fundamental right. True school choice includes options for public education, non-public education, or homeschooling. We do not view the goal of the edchoice program to hurt public schools, but rather to provide a faith-based option for parents who are the primary educators. EdChoice provides greater opportunities for parents to have choices where their children are educated. We want the best for families in our communities, so having options allows them to find a school they feel is the right learning environment where their students can reach their highest potential.

Lima and other cities in Ohio will continue to thrive if we have both public and private options in the community.

Catholic Families and schools like LCC have already started planning for next school year. We want to ensure that all families that are on traditional EdChoice will continue to receive their existing scholarships. For the families that are newly eligible, waiting on the State Legislature to make decisions, many of them have begun the process to apply to LCC and are in a holding state. This is unfair to both the students who have taken placement exams and to the parents who are seeking an alternative for their student. It is also important to note that from a school perspective, the budgetary and scheduling/staffing processes for the 2020-21 school are well underway, making decisions related to those processes near impossible when so many variables are in limbo. The current atmosphere created by the Ohio Legislature is egregious to both families and schools.

### **III Personal Account**

My husband and I reside within the Lima City School District, an underperforming school district. As a parent, we understand first hand how frustrating this process has been. My oldest has attended the same school for five years, and the current state of affairs does not allow us to renew our applications. As a private school educator who makes on average 80% of her public school counterparts, having the EdChoice scholarship ensures that my husband and I are able to send our two boys to a Catholic school which affirms the values and beliefs we strive to teach at home.

### **IV Conclusion**

EdChoice should be continued and further strengthened. I ask the General Assembly to give families and schools assurances by preserving the rights of families to choose the best educational pathway for their child(ren).