

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to have my voice heard in the debate over the Ed Choice Scholarship. My youngest daughter is a current recipient of the Ed Choice Scholarship. Her education has been exactly what we had hoped for her as she has attended Middletown Christian Schools. She has been in an environment enriched with God's love as she learns writing, mathematics, Spanish, art, reading, social skills, and more. We are so thankful for the blessing of the Ed Choice Scholarship, and want other families to have the same choice we have had.

My middle daughter has not had that blessing. She is by law - my niece, and I have been her custodial guardian since she was nearly 2 years old. She was neglected and abused as a baby, and has had lifelong complications from that including Reactive Attachment Disorder. The road with her has been paved with misery in part because the public school system we live in has consistently failed her. She was not in an environment enriched with God's love. I could not get the Ed Choice Scholarship because of the way our custody papers read, the school district my sister lived in before she left was not in academic probation - even though the school district I reside in is - the choice was made by the district financially responsible for her. It is so crucial for children, especially at a young age to be in a good environment. It is even more crucial for children who have been victims of abuse and neglect. My school district repeatedly failed her. In second grade, every single day I received a phone call from the school between 9am and 10am that I had to come pick her up because she was not following the rules and endangering herself. After a few weeks of this, I realized they were ill equipped to manage her behaviors, and I began asking them to help me find more a more suitable placement for her. They kept ignoring my request and by early December, they transported her to a hospital, stating to me that my 7 year old was having a nervous breakdown. She was merely reacting to the poor supports they had in place, and was promptly released by the hospital, who did not agree with the school's accusations. I was furious and told the school she would not be returning and I demanded better placement for her. They agreed with me, and I wound up home schooling her for the next few weeks because I refused to let her return to that environment. I have heard others in our district talk about how poorly their children have been handled as well. If they want to keep children in their schools - they must first learn how to properly treat them.

The district I reside in has tried to make positive changes and I pray they are successful, but until they are, it is just not right to punish families who want a better choice for their children. These districts need to fix their failing systems to keep students in their doors instead of trying to bar students from having the choice to leave. Because of my experiences, I am staunchly against the removal of the Ed Choice scholarship. You would be condemning children to be raised up in environments that are wrong for them, and reinforcing the poor academics and supports the public schools have in place for their students. It is better that families have a choice in the matter - especially when the schools will not or cannot embrace the practices that would make them successful.

Thank you for your consideration.

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Tabby Hahn