

Dear Chairman Jones and Committee Members,

Thank you for patiently welcoming witnesses and written comments concerning HB 9, and for your careful consideration of the issues, as you and your fellow legislators labor to create a fair and equitable plan to provide access to quality education for the children of Ohio.

My name is Terri DiPietro, and I am the assistant administrator at Calumet Christian School, a chartered nonpublic school located within the boundaries of the Columbus City Schools district. Certainly, the proposed changes to the law, especially at the eleventh hour, would be detrimental to our nonpublic school and our families. Certainly, there is still work to do regarding improvement of funding formulas, state testing, and the current report card system. But I think the school-based EdChoice scholarships are important to retain because they address fairness and equity by providing for educational tax dollars, in large or small measure, to follow every student to the school of their choice.

Here are some figures from my local district, Columbus City Schools. According to the 2018-19 state report card, Columbus City Schools received \$1,043,937,580 in funding from local (48.9%), state (38%), federal (8.8%) and "other" (4.2%) sources. This funding provided **\$13,914** per pupil for the district's average daily membership (ADM) of 75,028 students. However, 29,590 (40%) of these students included in the ADM, for whom this funding is provided, did not attend a Columbus City School, but instead chose to attend an out of district school, online school, charter school, dropout recovery school, or private school.

According to the Foundation Funding Report, the funds which followed these students out of Columbus City Schools totalled \$193,362,745, an average of \$6535 per non-enrolled student. If the total funding received by the CCS district was the equivalent of \$13,914 per student, this means that there was \$218 million that did not follow these students out of CCS public schools, (\$7379 per non-enrolled student), but instead remained in the CCS district to improve the education of the enrolled students.

The net effect of subtracting the cost of students who chose to leave the public schools is that the available funding for the remaining 45,438 students enrolled in CCS was \$850,574,835 or **\$18,719** per pupil, \$4805 more per CCS public school student than if each student counted in the ADM had received an equal share. Another effect of school choice was that CCS had 40% fewer students for whom to provide buildings, staff and teachers. I would argue that the current school choice model is actually beneficial, not burdensome, to Columbus City Schools and each of its enrolled students.

The financial impact of school-based EdChoice vouchers was the least of any of the funded choice options in Columbus City Schools. Per the Foundation Funding Report, the average CCS disbursement for each of 5046 school-based EdChoice voucher students was \$4944. The average CCS disbursement for each of 19,128 charter school students was \$8270. If I were a public school administrator, I would be fighting much harder to retain the students who would leave my district for a charter school, because

that takes a much bigger bite out of public school funds than a private school student. (CCS disbursed \$158 million for charter school students, while expending \$25 million for the school-based vouchers.)

School-based vouchers are not the problem. The relatively low cost of these vouchers helps districts to provide a robust and varied range of school choice options for families. As a homeowner, I pay 67% of my property taxes to Columbus City Schools, and I think it would be unfair for public school districts to multiply the tax burden on Ohio citizens by trying to prevent funding from following students who opt out of an underperforming public school, and instead demand that the state pick up the whole tab. If the school-based voucher is eliminated, and the number of income-based vouchers increases, to be funded through a state budget appropriation, then all Ohioans will take a double tax hit to fund education.

I strongly support the principle that a portion of the funds received by a public school district should be permitted to follow a student who desires a better education than the one offered to them by their local public school, thus I am strongly in favor of retaining the school-based voucher. If Ohio legislators would decide to revise the list of designated underperforming schools, I believe they should do so in a manner which allows adequate time for families and private schools to be able to respond to those changes. Freezing the 2019-20 list of schools would be a reasonable solution for now. It would be minimally disruptive to 2020-21 school year budgeting and planning, for public schools, private schools and individual families. It would also address the concern of siblings qualifying for the voucher, and it would retain Ohio's strong commitment to supplying resources supporting educational choice options.

Thank you again for your patient and thorough consideration of these issues, and for your continued service to Ohio families and communities.

Sincerely,

Terri DiPietro

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State & Federal Programs Administrator, Xenos Christian Schools  
2774 Calumet St., Columbus, OH 43202  
[dipietrot@xenos.org](mailto:dipietrot@xenos.org) | 614.261.8136