

Dear sirs and madams,

The EdChoice Scholarship reform the House has so HASTILY come up with and are trying to convince the senate is a good plan has such a major flaw you would be remiss in passing it as presented. My issue with rushing this is the making the scholarship funds only available to low-income students. That kind of reform will completely keep a family like mine from EVER having the option of providing our other daughter with a private and Christian education. We have known for a long time that Wilmington City School district has been declining academically and last year the district administration made a drastic change by going to grade level centers, placing over 600 K-2 students in one building. Knowing our in going Developmentally Delayed kindergartener would never be successful in that kind of chaos we decided to homeschool her while her younger sister attended preschool. When their assigned building ended up on the failing school list for this school year and when we found out about the existence of the EdChoice grant we jumped at the opportunity to send our in going kindergartner and now 1st grader to our local private Christian school. We raised two biological children in Cincinnati who had the benefit of going to a Christian school and felt blessed to be able to give our adopted children the same opportunity. If we had not have found out about EdChoice we would have continued to homeschool them both. While our local Christian school accepted my incoming kindergartner, they did not accept our developmentally delayed daughter, so we continued to homeschool her. Then, when we found out that our assigned local public school building was again on the failing school list, and before this sudden delay and cry for reform, we started searching for a Christian school that not only accepted EdChoice but also the Jon Peterson Scholarship which will provide services for our DD daughter. We were very excited when we found one on the way to my husband's work. If you pass this reform as the House is presenting, a middle-class family like ours would NOT be considered low income and yet we make nowhere near enough to pay to send her to that Christian school. We have visited that school, we have raised her hopes and gotten her excited. If you pass this reform, we will have to tell her "We're sorry, the law suddenly changed, and we can't afford to send you to that school." She, with her delayed mind, will not understand.

The public-school officials have made such a fuss about their schools losing money due to the scholarship, but my question is what have they been doing with the money (outside of salaries) in the years they failed and parents DIDN'T take advantage of EdChoice? I understand that they lose the \$4650 per student but they are OUR taxes, we've paid them whether we homeschooled them or sent them to the public school, they still get the tax money of ALL the homeschooling families in our district, which is quite a large group. Why should we be deprived the right to send our children to a school that aligns with not only our beliefs but is academically strong when our local public school has so clearly failed over and over? We must wonder, why were the schools failing? Some blame overly large class sizes, my family is already helping with that problem. Then we must even consider how many students per classroom would REALLY have taken advantage of the EdChoice? Honestly, the percentage of parents who knew about the scholarship before the new media coverage is much less than you think. I didn't know about EdChoice until someone told me about it, quite by chance, just before the application cut off this school year. It is clearly not something the public schools advertise, and you don't see commercials stating, "You have a choice with EdChoice". How is taking away my daughter's opportunity to succeed in smaller classrooms, in an environment that is conducive for her success with services to meet her needs, going to help my local public school get off the failing school list? How will keeping a handful of students trapped in a school that is clearly not working for them suddenly going to improve a school's failing score? Will eliminating a failing school's eligibility suddenly make it to where the schools will no longer be failing? Will the money staying in the district suddenly improve their scores? Realistically, NO. If anything, they will lose ALL incentive to do better. What's left to encourage schools to push to improve report card scores? No consequences=continued failure.

Now, to address the current list. I do understand that a few schools ended up on the list that perhaps shouldn't have, but those few schools that surprisingly ended up on the list this year have consistently graded high on the state report card in years past. So much so that historically, people either try to move to those districts or open enroll their kids from other districts if possible. They come from upper-class neighborhoods where, if the parents in the district wanted their child in a

private school, they could afford to, and would have already, enrolled them in one. Their complaint is less money related and more pride related, knowing they have always been regarded as an excellent school district. That is understandable but, do you honestly think those are the schools whose parents will jump to take advantage of EdChoice? No, they know their school is still considered excellent and have great pride that their child attends such a school. The parents who take the time and spend the money applying and enrolling their children MONTHS before a new school year are the middle class families who have just been waiting for the chance and opportunity to send their children to a school that will meet their children's and family's needs. You MUST be fair to those of us who have already spent money on application and enrollment fees for the upcoming year as that is money we do not get back. I implore you to leave the list as is for now and take this next year to really think about a reform that would not leave out an ENTIRE class of people and yet continue to give schools an incentive to improve. Thank you for your time.

Tina Brausch