



February 13, 2020

Chairman Jones and members of the House Bill 9 Conference Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today regarding Ohio's EdChoice Voucher program. I am Vicki Brunn, superintendent of Van Wert City Schools.

I want to begin by thanking our State Congressman, Craig Riedel, and our State Senator, Rob McCulley. They have both been great about meeting with us and hearing our concerns on this matter. For many years Van Wert City Schools has worked diligently to make strides toward helping every one of our students reach their highest potential. We believe in welcoming every student with open arms and wrapping our arms around the whole child in order to ensure their success. I would like to list a few of our cutting edge programs we have in place. We are very proud of the fact that we are a district-wide Project Based Learning School (Play Based in our lowest grade levels) through New Tech, a nationally recognized structure. Our students are learning through connections to real world problems and creating solutions for our community. We teach early literacy using the Literacy Collaborative through The Ohio State University. We have over 70 STEAM course offerings. We are a Project Lead The Way Program school. Our students competed in MakerFest in Lima, Ohio the past three years finishing in first place two of those three years and taking second place the other year. We have a very strong Robotics Program in grades 6-12. I am perhaps the most proud of our CEO program (Career Exploration Opportunity Program). We began this program 3 years ago with a handful of students and the program has now grown to over 70 students and includes participation by all our county schools. We place students in businesses around our community as interns. It allows students to really examine an interest of theirs to help determine a future career path. We have students placed in our local hospital where they have been able to observe births, surgeries, and general patient care. We had a young man placed at Braun Industries as an engineering student. He was given a challenge to solve. He was able to take a process that was difficult and develop a solution that actually enabled them to double the production of that particular unit. We placed another engineering student at National Door and Trim where he was able to redesign their entire production floor in order to increase productivity. Now, in our fourth year, we are expanding the program to include more industrial positions to meet the needs of our students who would rather work in the trades and industry than attend a 4 year college or university. The point I'm trying to make is that we work very hard to continually give our students better and more varied educational opportunities. Last year alone we received two visits by State Board of Education members and the State Superintendent to see our CEO program because it is working so well to connect our students to future business and industry connections. They like what we are doing so well that they want to replicate it across the state of Ohio. So, if the State Report Card measure of Prepared For Success has any validity at all we should be scoring an "A". We scored a "D" this year and an "F" the year before. We received the same type of scores: D's and F's in our elementary early literacy measures when our Early Child Center received a 5 star rating for the past several years in "Step Up To Quality" and every child passed the third grade reading test. How can you possibly think those scores are valid in any way?? Yet, you are considering using those vary scores to determine that our state foundation money should be taken away for student vouchers to go to a private school. Ed Choice proponents think parents should have a choice in where they send their child. EdChoice vouchers to not give the parents the choice. The private school is who has the choice of whether or not to accept a student and whether or not the student can stay once they are there. How is it fair to call a public school system a failure and allow that student's state funding to go to a private school who may score even worse using the same accountability measures? But of course we will never know how the private school would score because they are not held to the same standard. How

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can the private school choose to accept state funding and not follow the same rules? I believe that any institution that receives state funding should be on an equal playing field. Finally, our community members work very hard for their money and when they vote to pass a levy to support our Van Wert City Schools, that's where they expect their money to be spent to help support our students. It is unconscionable for that money to be diverted to private schools through this shell game known as EdChoice. I believe that House Plan—SB 89 is a huge step in the right direction and I would urge the Senate to agree to move forward with the House Plan.

Chairman Jones and members of the House Bill 9 conference committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide input regarding Ohio's EdChoice Voucher program. I am happy to address your questions.