



**LUTHERAN EAST**

Christ-Centered Education for Life

**May 31, 2017**

**Testimony of Marquae Calhoun**

**House Education and Career Readiness Committee**

**Proponent – House Bill 200**

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. I am Marquae Calhoun, a 2017 graduate from Lutheran East High School. I am excited to tell you how school choice has impacted my life and I will be explaining the changes I went through by attending Lutheran High School East. I attended Warrensville Heights High my 8th grade and 9th grade year, so I entered Lutheran East as a sophomore. When I attended Warrensville I was in Honors classes but I did not receive the education I needed. I also had been in a lot of altercations during my years at Warrensville. My mom finally had enough and said it was time for another school and it was through God's glory that my best friend Malik Reaves had been accepted at Lutheran East. My mom asked me if it would be ok if I transferred to Lutheran East. At first I was not interested because I figured it would be just like every other time I had to change schools. You always had to fight people just so other kids didn't pick with you.

Truly I was done with trying to fit in and I did not want to fight anymore - I was really done with it, but I eventually came in to Lutheran East. I sat down with one of the Principal's, Mr. Prusinski. We had a good talk and what stood out the most to me was that it was a Christian school and they wore blazers and ties and sweaters. It made me really want to attend because I grew up in the church and I knew if I wanted to be a better person in life I needed to make this

jump and come here to Lutheran East. That way I would be around a Christ-centered environment 24/7.

When I finally became a student at Lutheran east it was a whole different environment than I had been used to. And what I mean by that is that at Lutheran East everyone cares for each other. The staff had good relationships with the students; they cracked jokes, they were supportive and they all around cared for each one of the students there. It was a mind blower for me because I was so used to people and teachers only doing things for themselves. It made me understand that there is good in the world that there are people who care. In my eyes Lutheran East is more than a school, it is a family. If one of the student's family members was to pass or was sick in the hospital, almost the whole staff showed up to support the student and family. It comforting to know that I had finally been blessed to have a group of people who cared about me as much as my mom and dad did.

That right there made me want to become better as a student and as a young man because the teaching staff had high hopes for me and my future. The fact is that I came from a broken home with a mom struggling to make ends meet. I have seen my dad put his hands on my mom and leave right afterwards. This built a character of anger and depression and protection for myself. I would go to school looking for someone to fight just to get this heavy burden off my shoulder.

When people see young people out here who are always in trouble or always fighting it is not just because we are angry - it is because we are hurt and we are trying to the best of our ability to get over it but we don't know how. The first thing we resort to is violence or fighting. That was my case growing up. I felt lost in the world because I knew God and knew he was very

important for me to know but I would wonder if God loved me like people say. If so, then why would he allow me to go through so much pain and confusion and depression? Why would he take the only thing I had and that was my family? Why would he hurt me like this?

Through my three years at Lutheran East I learned that God allows us to go through things for a reason and that nothing just happens. It is all a part of his plans and his plan is to allow these things to happen so that when the time comes to be put in the position God had planned, I would be ready. I also learned how to forgive and it allowed me forgive my Pops for the stuff he did. My studies at Lutheran East helped me understand that people are not perfect and they make mistakes - but at the end of the day we must forgive them and love them.

I also have a little brother who is just like me. He has seen and went through just as much as I have. I know that if I could be changed then so could he, so I insisted that mom send him to Lutheran East as well. He is a 9th grader and I know he will be pushed to get to know God better.

I graduated on Friday evening in front of my friends and family. In the fall I will be attending Youngstown State University where I am going to study to be a nurse while also playing football. If it be God's will, I am working to make it to the NFL. That's why I love Lutheran East because not only are they teaching by the minute they are also changing lives by the second. And I pray for other kids to have the same choice, the same opportunity I did.

I would like to challenge the legislature to continue to increase school choice options so that all students have the ability to choose the right environment for themselves. My mother would not have been able to send my brother and I to Lutheran East without the Ed Choice

Scholarship. I know the difference that Lutheran East has made in my life and my hope is that other students around our state get that same opportunity.

MATTHEW  
CALHOUN