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FIELDS

October 8, 2017

House Bill 200 *Ohio Opportunity Scholarship* Committee Members

To whom it may concern:

My family was granted the *Ohio EdChoice* scholarship for my daughter and son this year. We couldn't be more pleased with the opportunity to choose the most appropriate of schools for our family - Immanuel Lutheran School, in Hamilton, Ohio. You see, the smaller school with smaller class sizes are much more personal. Everyone knows each other and cares for one another, deeply. This was the most influential decision for our special needs son, Max. Max is a very smart, exuberant, and oftentimes impulsive young boy who we had the fortune to adopt two years ago. He was a former 25 week extreme-preemie and extremely-low birthweight (900 grams). He faced many challenges developmentally and spent two years in public pre-school. It was a difficult road, wrought with many meetings, developmental assessments, and a controlled IEP. And though his preschool teacher, Miss Hapner, served him well, together we knew he would need a significant amount of one-on-one time, sensory-processing breaks, and curricular support once he began kindergarten. We knew the school within our designated district would not suffice.

My wife and I have been treatment foster parents for many years, and have had several of our foster kids in the public school setting. With regard to the school within our designated zoning, the system failed these children. We worked arduously BEFORE the school year began to enlist the help of the educators and ensure an IEP, with no success. Throughout the first week of school, our one foster daughter was sent home twice - during the first week of school. We again approached the IEP and advocated for four months with no success. Two of these foster children moved to an adoptive home and were asked to repeat kindergarten. This was not what we wanted for our son.

We met one of the teachers at Immanuel Lutheran at a neighborhood block party and voiced so many of our concerns. She was able to help us navigate the *Ohio EdChoice* process after we spoke with the principal and several staff. These people love my son. They all are conscientious when it comes to his behavior and have met with us to understand how to help. No one sees him as a hinderance, but rather an enriching

member of their collective family. Max has difficult moments, and the school has worked with us to provide and seek feedback on a daily basis - and within the first 6 weeks of school, Max is settling into a routine in an intimate setting with known friends and helpers alongside him. He is thriving in an environment that YOU have made possible. My biological daughter Evelyn, is a straight-A student who excels in many areas. She is blessed to receive a foundational education coupled with a focus on serving others in her school and community. For that I am so grateful and proud to call Ohio my home. Your work to allow my family to select an appropriate education is vital to our family, as we are a one-income home, and could not afford the advantages and necessary support that comes from this scholarship. YOU are helping Max succeed and settling our minds. Without this scholarship, our son would be placed in the same classroom of the teacher who thought our family crazy for seeking IEPs for foster children in our care BEFORE school even began. We know our children. We love them and spend each day advocating for their successes. We know where they will thrive and how to support them. HB200 makes all of this possible.

We are grateful for the opportunity and are proud to partner with Immanuel Lutheran School to see our son, Max, and daughter, Evelyn, reach their full potential. We are thankful to have them in an environment that puts them first, seeks to understand them as individuals, praises them for the diversity they bring to the school, and impresses the importance of service to others. YOU make this possible! And for that, we sincerely thank you.

Sincerely,



Christopher & Kathryn Fields