

Chair Brenner, Vice-Chair Slaby, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Ohio House Education and Career Readiness Committee. My name is Shari Perkins and I am honored to be able to testify before you today in favor of House Bill 200 as a parent and as a school choice advocate.

As a parent, the EdChoice Scholarship was a true blessing for our family. Prior to a friend telling me about the scholarship, I did not even know that private school was an option. Both of my sons did very well at their public elementary school but I found that there were many inconsistencies with the education that each one of them received. My youngest son was tested and was accepted into the Gifted and Talented Program. The program was great however; he still was not challenged in his schoolwork.

At the beginning of my oldest son's fifth grade year, a parent told us that we qualified for the EdChoice Scholarship and gave us information about the school that her child was attending. Little did we know that this single piece of information would change our lives forever. We applied to the school and my oldest son was accepted. Even though his reading tests scores were a bit lower than what was required, they welcomed him with open arms. He graduated from high school in the top 10% of his class and received over \$20,000 in scholarship money from his university. He is currently a junior at Bellarmine University and has been on the Dean's List for the past three semesters.

Our youngest son was accepted to the same private school and found the same success academically. He graduated with an Honors Diploma from Tree of Life Christian School in May of 2017. He was accepted by the University of Cincinnati and gained entrance into their prestigious College of Engineering with a major in Architectural Engineering.

Having the advantage of attending a top-rated Ohio private school along with being able to use the EdChoice Scholarship gave both boys the proper foundation to be able to excel at the college level. They were well prepared for college and were able to use the academic foundation they received to help other students transition from high school to college. Both of them have commented that college was easier than high school!!

Not only can I share the benefits of the EdChoice Scholarship from a personal level, I can testify to the tremendous impact I see that the scholarship has on families throughout the State of Ohio. As a school choice counselor, I come into contact with many families throughout the day. So many families are looking for options other than public school for their children and my position as a counselor gives me the opportunity to share the same information with them that was given to me almost 10 years ago. It is a tremendous feeling to hear the joy, happiness and even tears when they find out that they have a choice that they never knew they had. I know that feeling of relief and it brings me great joy to give it to another family.

The EdChoice Scholarship gave me and gives other families the affordability of private school when that option seemed out of the question. Families are benefitting from the current programs and the payoff with student success is proof! Expanding these opportunities with the passage of House Bill 200 would open the door to so many more families. While some students might not attend a low-performing school, parents would still consider private school as an option if the cost of a private school education was not a hindrance. With the passage of House Bill 200, more Ohio families would be able to find the right fit for their children and the impact of these options would definitely have a positive effect on these families and the future of their children.

Chair Brenner, Vice-Chair Slaby, Ranking Member Fedor and members of the House Education and Career Readiness Committee, thank you for taking the time to listen to my testimony. I will be happy to answer any questions that you may have.