

**Rocco Fumi**  
**Principal/St. Mary Magdalene Catholic School**  
**Proponent/HB 200**  
**House Education and Career Readiness Committee**  
**Oct. 10, 2017**

**Introduction** – Good afternoon Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair Slaby, Ranking Member Fedor and Committee Members. My name is Rocco Fumi, and I am the principal of St. Mary Magdalene School, located on the West side of Columbus. I have been an educator for 34 years, and the principal at St. Mary Magdalene for the last 16 years.

**Background** – St. Mary Magdalene has embraced the EdChoice scholarship program since its first year, 2006, and the EdChoice Expansion scholarship program since its first year, 2013. Not only has my school welcomed larger numbers of students receiving EdChoice and Expansion each year, but I have been an advocate of the programs by encouraging other schools in the Diocese of Columbus to participate. As I give testimony, the statistics I present include BOTH programs.

Currently, 233 (or 92%) of Magdalene’s 252 students are recipients of the EdChoice scholarships. In 2006, 18 (or 9%) of 196 students were EdChoice participants. As you can see, this program, which would be sustained by H.B.200, has not only increased the number of students receiving scholarships, it has grown and enhanced the St. Mary Magdalene School community.

These scholarships help to provide an optimum educational and positive cultural experience for youth that are most often marginalized, economically impoverished and academically neglected.

We already know that 92% of Magdalene’s students are EdChoice recipients. The racial composition of those are: 13% African American, 15% multi-racial, 36% Latino, and 36% Caucasian. 88% of Magdalene students economically qualify for free or reduced lunch benefits, and 71% would otherwise attend 10 elementary and middle schools that have been identified by the state board of education as on academic emergency. Scholarship students at Magdalene receive the full benefit of our academic instruction and community support. Ultimately, this program gives these families the right to choose a better avenue for their child’s educational journey.

While it may seem the main beneficiaries of EdChoice are the actual recipients and their families, in fact, the St. Mary Magdalene community as a whole has been greatly enhanced by this truly diverse addition to our school. I would even go as far as to say that the unique and historical Westgate community continues to flourish through our school’s presence and sustainability.

Due to the vast number of EdChoice students at Magdalene, even those not on scholarship are required to complete state-mandated testing. This affords ALL of our

students' academic diversity and access to multiple layers of assessment and evaluation.

It is my belief that EdChoice, along with other scholarship programs such as Jon Peterson, Autism and Cleveland, has benefitted more students academically and socially than any other I have experienced in my 34 years as an educator.

While it is easy to cite statistics and put numbers on paper, I welcome the opportunity to have you visit St. Mary Magdalene School so you may personally witness the impact of EdChoice in the hearts, minds and faces of our students, their families and our faculty and staff.

Thank you.