

Yonah Donald
Student at Heritage Christian School
Proponent/HB 200
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Good afternoon Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair Slaby, Ranking Member Fedor and Committee Members. My name is Yonah Donald, and I am a Sophomore at Heritage Christian School.

I have been going to Heritage for five years now. Before I went to Heritage, I went to a school called Bellstone. If you don't know, or if you have never heard of Bellstone Elementary, it is a public school in Canton, Ohio. It is in a rather urban neighborhood, and it is somewhere that I would honestly not recommend. I have seen so many fights and hatred there. People even tried to commit suicide, in elementary school, because they were getting bullied.

I began not to care about anything. I had no emotions. When that school year was over, I went home and I was jumping up and down because I was so happy to leave that school. Later that night, my Mom let me know that I was going to Heritage because we got an EdChoice Scholarship.

At first, I was a little scared. Many questions ran through my mind, like what are they going to think of me? What if they are just like the people at Bellstone? What if I don't make any friends? What if I make the same mistakes at Heritage that I made at Bellstone? These questions haunted me until the first day of school.

I was nervous when I first went to Heritage, but not for long. The teachers were very welcoming to me, I made a lot of friends, and I felt like I finally found a place where I could be myself and feel at home doing it.

All of the friends that I have met at Heritage have shaped me into who I am today. They have made me a better person altogether in numerous ways. One of the ways is spiritually. I'm happy that I can practice my faith, and feel closer in my spiritual walk. If it wasn't for Heritage staff and students, I wouldn't have the values and character that I have today.

Not only that, but I have also grown mentally. Many people refer to me as an old soul. While it isn't my ideal title, I am proud to have it. I also care much more about my grades and being successful in school.

Last of all, I have grown emotionally. Before when I went to public school, all feelings were gone. With everything at home being difficult, the school environment being chaotic made it worse. When I came to Heritage, the environment felt different. I felt happiness and joy for the first time in years. My emotions started to be put back together, and I'm so happy that my Mom chose for me to go to Heritage. I'm so happy that I qualified for the EdChoice Scholarship.

I think my school is a great school, and it is a great fit for me. People used to ask me who I admire, and I never knew the answer. Now I say that the Teachers at Heritage inspire me. They

pull me up from stuff that happens at home to stuff that happens between the school walls. They make me happy and help me to go forward with my day. At school there is so much potential, so much love, so much joy, and yes, we still have our bad days. But, they are days worth enduring.

Thank you for supporting School Choice, and students like me. At this time, I can answer any questions that you have.