



May 22, 2018

Chairman Andrew Brenner  
Ohio House of Representatives  
77 South High Street, 13<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Columbus, OH 43215

Vice Chair Marilyn Slaby  
Ohio House of Representatives  
77 South High Street, 11<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Columbus, OH 43215

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair Slaby and members of the House Education and Career Readiness Committee,

Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to express support for House Bill 200 which creates the Opportunity Scholarship Program to extend school choice options for the students and families of Ohio. My name is Kim Preston, and I serve as the Midwest Regional Legislative Director for Excellence in Education in Action. ExcelinEd in Action is a nonpartisan, nonprofit education advocacy organization.

To understand my position, it helps to first understand some of my fundamental beliefs. I believe all children have the ability to learn and achieve if they have access to quality educational options that fit their individual strengths and weaknesses. Education is not a one-size-fits-all proposition, and no single school can meet the needs of every single student. Therefore, ensuring a variety of quality options are available will help families tailor their student's educational experience to their needs. When we do that well, children thrive, and the whole system benefits.

You have undoubtedly heard some witnesses suggest that research shows school choice does not work. While I will not dispute that it is POSSIBLE to find a study that says that, I will tell you the VAST majority of research shows quite the opposite.

In 2016, Dr. Greg Forster reviewed 100 existing rigorous academic studies of the effects of private education choice programs and found overwhelmingly positive outcomes. Of the 100 studies:

- 87 studies showed positive effects;
- Ten studies showed no visible effect; and
- Only three studies found negative effects.

Key findings from the studies include:

- Participants in education choice programs see academic benefits;
- Students who remain in public schools once private education choice programs are implemented see academic benefits;
- Education choice programs lead to more diverse schools;
- Education choice programs are more fiscally efficient; and
- Education choice programs promote shared civic values.



If you would like to access any or all of this research, I would be more than happy to share it with you.

Perhaps the most important points I can make are those from my perspective as a mom of two daughters. I think sometimes we lose sight of the impact choice policies can have on real people, so I will take just a moment to remind you that parents make school decisions for a multitude of reasons.

In my case, my daughters have VERY different personalities, different strengths and weaknesses, and different approaches to learning. My oldest is very structured and organized, and frankly, can be quite a handful if she's feeling bored or insecure. My youngest thrives in a more chaotic environment with more autonomy, throws caution to the wind and is very hands-on. While one school might serve my oldest well, it is not necessarily going to fit my youngest.

Fortunately, while I live in public school district with mostly poor-performing schools, that same district offers a handful of high-quality options accessible through its lottery-based magnet program. That means I have the opportunity to make school selections based on my daughters' individual needs. As a result, and thanks to a lottery that swung in our favor this year, my daughters will attend two different public elementary schools next year, and I am so thankful I was able to carefully select a school for each of them.

That said, if we hadn't secured seats at public schools of our choice, I would have pursued private school options in my neighborhood. While it may not have been in my financial plan as a single mom of two, their dad and I would have made it work. But not everyone has that flexibility, and that's a shame. Family income should not be the barrier standing in the way of any student receiving a great education tailored to his or her needs.

At the end of the day, parents know their children, and they ought to be empowered to select the best educational options for them. Add to that the research that demonstrates all the positive outcomes of school choice programs, and it's hard to argue against them. School choice policies are good for students and families, and I encourage you to support House Bill 200.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kim Preston". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kim Preston  
Midwest Regional Legislative Director