



Proponent Testimony Regarding Sub HB 305 Ohio House Finance Committee

Chair Oelslager, Vice Chair Callender, Ranking Member Cera, and members of the House Finance Committee: thank you for the opportunity to testify today as a proponent of Amended HB 305. My name is Elizabeth Kirby and I am the Superintendent of the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District.

Before accepting my current role, I served as Chief of School Strategy and Planning for Chicago Public Schools. I spent a total of 23 years in Chicago Public Schools as a teacher, principal, and administrator. I am, at present, in my second year at Cleveland Heights-University Heights, and am so glad to be back home in Cleveland.

You might recall that in February, I came to the Statehouse along with other leaders, supporters and students from my district to testify on House Bill 9. Although we were one of hundreds of districts which descended upon Columbus to give testimony regarding EdChoice, the reason CH-UH may stick out in your mind is because in the state of Ohio, the children of my district are giving up the highest percentage of their state funding to pay for other children's private tuition via EdChoice.

This year alone, a third of our state funding – more than \$7 million – has been deducted from our budget to pay for private school tuition via EdChoice Scholarships. Next year, we expect that figure to be more than \$9 million.

Of course, about a month after our trip to Columbus, the COVID-19 pandemic forced schools across the state and the nation to close their doors and move to a virtual education platform. Now our state funding is cut an additional \$1.4 million annually with federal dollars covering only a fraction of that loss. **Add to this our levy failure this spring, and we are facing a deficit to the tune of \$9 million by 2022.** We need relief, and we need it immediately.

I greatly appreciate the EdChoice scholarship-related components included in HB 305. It is so important that the state move away from the district-deduct model. While the EdChoice policy shift is just one of the many areas for which the CH-UH school district is grateful, its inclusion in the bill demonstrates that Speaker Cupp and Representative Patterson have listened to school leaders who have been asking for help for years.

The Fair School Funding Plan could bode extremely well for CH-UH, allowing us to ask less of an already highly taxed community and ensuring that the funding we receive is based on the actual cost of educating our students.

I thank you for the thought and consideration you have put into this bill thus far, including the deliberations made during meetings of this committee and the hours spent fine-tuning the legislation alongside educators. I appreciate the opportunity to share our perspective and support.

Mr. Chairman, I am happy to answer any questions you or your committee members may have.