

Robyn Houze SB11 Testimony for February 21, 2023

Good afternoon,

Thank you to Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee for allowing me to speak today. Thank you, Senator O'Brien, for introducing the Parent Educational Freedom Act and for recognizing that all parents deserve a choice in where their children attend school.

My name is Robyn Houze. My husband Jason and I have two sons attending the Olentangy Local School District.

My two sons are not being challenged to excel in their studies. When they meet the minimum standards of an assignment, they are praised for success instead of inspired to work to their full potential. Accolades are often over inflated causing students to believe they are excelling when they are just doing average work. Too much of their school day is being filled with social emotional learning instead of reading, writing, and arithmetic. Sadly, there is no plan to recover from the Covid related loss of learning. My husband and I are currently paying for outside tutoring for both English language arts and math for our older son. We have asked the school for assistance but are told he is doing just fine. Staff expectations have been lowered and each year the students are being passed on to the next set of teachers for them to deal with the decrease in academic performance.

We would have liked to have had the opportunity to send our sons to another school for kindergarten to have avoided Olentangy's funky kindergarten schedule. The 2 day some weeks and 3-day other weeks provides many logistical hardships for parents and is confusing to kids. The offering of full-time and even part-time enrichment programs by preschools or daycares in the area for the off days is limited further challenging the situation for working parents.

Being that the goal of the Parent Educational Freedom Act is universal eligibility to all students in the state of Ohio. We were excited to hear about SB11 being introduced and the opportunity it could provide for our sons. However, as we research private schools we are learning some of our top choices are not accepting the EdChoice voucher. The schools qualify to accept the EdChoice voucher but are choosing not to accept it. So, even if SB11 passes we would still find our family limited in our educational freedom.

Senate Bill 11 is good and will help many Ohio families, but I urge you to consider enhancing the bill to be more than an expanded voucher program. As written SB11 is only a partial fix to the problem. What is desperately needed by parents is a state program that allows resources to follow the student no matter what public, community, or chartered nonpublic school option they choose for their children to attend.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 11. I'm happy to answer any questions.