

December 2nd, 2024 – Robyn Houze Testimony SB 304

Thank you to Chair Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee for allowing me to speak today. Thank you, Senator Romanchuk, for introducing the Establish the Nonchartered Educational Savings Account Program bill to the Senate.

Good afternoon,

I stand before you today because my husband Jason and I realized that our local public school district, even with its 5 Star Rating was failing our two boys. After attending many meetings with staff and board members to no avail, we felt forced to find a new school to provide the learning that they deserved. After much research, the right solution for our family was a Nonchartered school. It would have been easier to choose a Chartered school that offered the financial advantage of the Ed Choice voucher. Our choice in school has resulted in financial sacrifices but we are now watching our children learning leaps and bounds academically ahead of the public counterpart. We are seeing them thrive instead of falling through the cracks.

Across Ohio, public schools are failing many of our students. They are failing to produce high schoolers who can do math in their head or read past the middle school level. Ohio schools are failing to produce the next generation of US Military: Soldiers, Airman, Sailors, Marines and Guardians. Ohio needs to revise its 5-Star evaluation program and ensure accountability of public schools but that is a discussion for another day.

Today we are focusing on expanding educational options for parents to select from to ensure a quality education for their students. Due to the fact that there are many similarities between the teaching professionals in public schools and nonpublic chartered schools, the best option for parents may be a Nonchartered school. One that can offer an education rooted in knowledge and virtue that provides a foundation for independent, responsible, happy lives. A school that builds grit, confidence, and fortitude in its scholars. One that instills the joy of learning to equip them with a lifetime of knowledge.

We witnessed firsthand how public schools are lowering the bar for our Ohio kids with group-based student-led classrooms where teachers and students are co-equals. Ohio kids deserve better, and Ohio needs a change if the next generation is to be capable of civic virtue to advance the quality of life in our state. Educational dollars should fund students, not systems. Providing parents with more affordable options to find the right fit for their students is an immediate step to improving education in Ohio. Adding competition will require public schools to perform better. The future of Ohio depends on the education of the next generation.

Ohio needs to pass noncharter ESAs for a better Ohio and to be an educational leader in our country.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 304. I would be happy to answer any questions at this time.