

Chair Fowler Arthur, Vice Chair Odioso, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the House Education Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Carolyn Pinney, and I am a mother of two children enrolled in our local public schools. I want to express my deep concern over the expansion of the EdChoice voucher program and its impact on Ohio's public schools.

I value public schools as a vital community resource, open to all. Strong public schools make neighborhoods desirable, attract homeowners, and drive local investment—benefiting everyone. Unlike private schools, public schools must serve every student, regardless of ability, background, or financial status. Growing up, my mother was a teacher's aide for students with special needs. I saw firsthand how essential these services are for families, and they should remain accessible to all at our public schools.

I also fear that EdChoice is segregating our schools. While marketed as a way to help low-income families, the numbers tell a different story. Between the 2022-23 and 2023-24 school years—when universal eligibility took effect—voucher use increased by 65,000, yet private school enrollment grew by less than 4,000. Most vouchers go to families already in private schools, not those seeking new opportunities.

Meanwhile, private schools have raised tuition significantly. For example, Hathaway Brown, a well-respected private school, reported that the average family paid \$9,600 in tuition for the 2022-23 school year. By 2023-24, that number jumped to \$12,000—a 25% increase. This program isn't about helping struggling families; it's about shifting public dollars into private hands, exacerbating inequality rather than addressing it.

I believe in freedom of choice—but not when it comes at the expense of my children's education and my community's future. If a family chooses private education, that is their decision, but public tax dollars should support schools that serve *everyone*, not just a select few. What's happening with EdChoice is part of a larger, troubling pattern in our country—a sweeping transfer of wealth from working families to the already privileged. Public funds, meant to benefit the many, are being funneled into private institutions that raise tuition, limit access, and remain unaccountable to the taxpayers footing the bill. This isn't about opportunity—it's about entitlement, and Ohio's children are paying the price.

I ask you to consider my testimony and choose to support the 90% of Ohio students who attend public schools. Please include the 3rd phase of the bipartisan Fair School Funding Plan in the state budget. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.