

Chair Fowler Arthur, Vice Chair Odioso, Ranking Member Robinson, and Honorable Members of the House Education Committee, thank you for the privilege to provide testimony in support of strengthening and expanding education opportunities for Ohio families House Bill 96.

My name is Chauncey Montgomery, and I reside in eastern Delaware County with my wife and five children. I would ask the State to consider expanding school choice by granting parents Educational Savings Accounts to fund their students' education.

I appreciate the State's expansion of school choice with the EdChoice program in the previous biennium budget. It allows many families to send their children to schools that meet their specific needs. More so, it creates competition, making for stronger schools. However, despite the availability of EdChoice Vouchers, barriers still stand in the way of true education freedom in the Buckeye State.

We are one such family that does not have access to the State's current EdChoice Vouchers, because our children attend a non-chartered, non-public institution, namely, Columbus Classical Academy (CCA). After researching several options in our region, we chose CCA for several reasons.

The first reason we chose CCA for our family is because it offers our children a well-rounded, rigorous education. Not only do our children gain the skills needed to succeed in the world, such as math, reading, and writing, but they also receive a strong liberal arts education, grounded in the Western tradition. I would argue such an education forms the foundation of a free, enlightened, and prosperous society.

Second, CCA aligns with the virtues we are trying to instill in our children. Specifically, the lessons, literature, and culture of the institution work in harmony to build fortitude, prudence, justice, temperance, faith, hope, and charity in our children. Students are being provided with the nourishment needed to make them responsible, upright citizens. Essentially, they are being formed into good neighbors – hardworking, honest people who care for their fellow man.

Finally, from a practical standpoint, CCA is within a reasonable distance from our residence, so we can easily transport our children to and from school without significantly disrupting our daily schedule. There are a few classical schools in Ohio that would meet our family's needs, but not a single one is within a feasible distance from our home. CCA not only meets our educational needs but it is conveniently located about 15 miles from our house.

As mentioned earlier, our family does not have access to the State's current EdChoice Vouchers because CCA is a non-chartered, non-public school. As such, educating our children at the school of our choice creates a significant financial hardship for our family, as it does for many others. However, the State has an opportunity in House Bill 96 to correct this oversight by establishing Educational Savings Accounts to fund students' education. By doing so, you would provide equality of education to all children in Ohio and would level the playing field, making school choice accessible to all families.

I appreciate you taking the time to consider my testimony on House Bill 96.

Chauncey G. Montgomery